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The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) issued a mandate in 2009 that all teachers must demonstrate leadership. This mandate created a subsequent need for school systems across North Carolina to further develop their teachers as leaders. While NCDPI defined “teachers demonstrating leadership” through various elements of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS), a review of the literature indicated a diverse set of definitions of teacher leadership that exist, a variety of pathways by which teacher leadership development has been approached, and scholarly debate over how researchers might determine the nature of effective professional development. The extant literature pointed toward case study as a useful method for examining these issues. Moreover, elements of the extant literature framed a paradox whereby NCDPI’s mandate that all teachers demonstrate leadership was to be fulfilled within a historically underprofessionalized field of practice.

This case study examined the nature of one North Carolina school district’s teacher leadership development program, how district leaders viewed their role in distributing leadership and developing their teachers as leaders, the nature of what and how teachers learned about teacher leadership through participation in the program, and what other school districts and practitioners might learn from the results of this case study. Methodologies for this case study included a qualitative survey of 16 out of

the 26 teachers who participated in the program's fourth cohort, two rounds of interviews with seven of these teachers who acted as key informants before and after they had completed the program, interviews with the superintendent and three other district-level administrators who had taken part in developing and implementing the program, and various elements of programmatic document review. A major component of this document review entailed an analysis of themes that were present across all of the 79 participants' end-of-program written reflections that had been submitted to and archived by their superintendent over the first four years of the program's existence. These reflections were written in response to an identical set of questions and prompts.

The results of this case study were examined through a bifocal conceptual framework that focused on distributed leadership to consider the views and experiences of those in the school system who developed the program and constructivist learning to consider the views and experiences of teachers who completed the program. Through this bifocal framework, seven examples were identified of how teachers' leadership capacities were developed through constructivist forms of learning. Moreover, results from this case study suggested that there were four ways in which the program aligned with scholarly views on the professionalization of teaching and two ways in which this program misaligned with such views. The conclusion of this case study also includes two possible areas for future research as well as a guiding set of questions that are intended to help school systems conceptualize a framework for their own teacher leadership development.

BUILDING AN “ARMY” OF LEADERS: A CASE STUDY OF A SCHOOL SYSTEM  
DEVELOPING TEACHERS’ LEADERSHIP CAPACITIES

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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## CHAPTER I

### RATIONALE AND FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Beginning in 2009, every school district in North Carolina was required by the Department of Public Instruction to adopt a new set of teaching standards and evaluation practices that, in part, require all teachers to demonstrate leadership. The state's adoption of these *North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards* (NCPTS, 2009) was a significant move away from a somewhat fragmented statewide system of standards and evaluation schemes toward, "...a new vision of school leadership and a new set of skills that teachers must use daily..." (McREL, 2009, p. 4), including the requirement that all teachers demonstrate leadership in their classrooms, schools, and profession. This could be described as a paradigmatic shift (Covey, 1989; Duffy, 2010) in professional standards and expectations for the intended *outcomes* of teaching and learning in the realm of public education, influenced to a large extent by private sector industries and corporations (Trilling & Fadel, 2009), and a nod to the highly rationalized, standards-based movement, reminiscent of the Progressive Era of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century—an era that continues to influence public education in the United States (Mehta, 2013).

### **Rationale for this Study**

The adoption of the NCPTS and its related mandates for professional practices has created some collective challenges for teachers, as well as for their district and school administrators who must provide the support and professional development opportunities necessary to shift toward a paradigm in which all teachers are required to enact leadership (Berry, Byrd, & Wieder, 2013; Lord, Cress, & Miller, 2008). By virtue of the NCPTS and its teacher evaluation policy, school districts and principals in the state of North Carolina are faced with the challenge of providing adequate opportunities for *all* teachers to demonstrate proficiency across various elements of what the State Board of Education has defined as “leadership.” Additionally, fiscal politics and negotiations related to funding teachers’ pay in North Carolina have included a push toward districts offering differential pay to teachers who take on more leadership responsibilities and initiatives that offer extra pay to teachers selected to develop professional development modules and model lesson plans for statewide use (e.g., NC Governor’s Teacher Network, 2014). Such factors have therefore coalesced in recent years to make teacher leadership a high-stakes requirement of the profession.

As I will discuss in Chapter Two through an exploration of extant literature and an analysis of the NCPTS, the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders have often been defined as including formal/informal leadership and mentoring roles; active participation in committee meetings; service on school improvement initiatives; participation in teacher working condition surveys; and other efforts to advocate for the

profession; service-oriented leadership projects that interface with and seek to improve the surrounding communities; and, support for ongoing professional improvement through graduate school, advanced certification training, and/or district-led professional development activities. Given that teachers in North Carolina are now required to demonstrate development of these skills starting from their first year on the job, it appears that this may be easier said than done.

Many stakeholders now have a role in developing teachers as leaders: universities/colleges, school districts and governing bodies, professional development organizations, and the individual teachers themselves (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Furthermore, this prevailing paradigmatic shift toward promoting teacher leadership in public education suggests widespread impact upon teachers at various stages of their careers. Somewhat counter to the notion that teachers must be “proficient” as leaders within the first three years of their careers in North Carolina (NCPTS, 2009), research has suggested that teachers are apt to enact leadership at increasing levels during years six to nine of their career, plateau in this tendency for around a decade, and then renew increased leadership characteristics beginning in year 18 of their careers (Watt, Huerta, & Mills, 2009, as cited in Hunzicker, 2012). Therefore, the requirements of formal teacher evaluation in North Carolina set forth by the State Board of Education accelerated the timeframe within which teachers must demonstrate proficiency in leadership to no greater than the first three years of their employment, no matter how well- or ill-prepared they are to do so upon entering the profession. Speaking to this

paradox, Bond (2011) framed the challenges that new teachers to the field may have in enacting leadership through his critique of pre-service preparation of teachers as leaders:

Although all teachers are expected to perform immediately at high levels, educators acknowledge that some first-year teachers may not be ready to lead. Some are not ready mentally. They lack awareness of teacher leadership, or do not see its value. To address these issues, preparation programs can introduce the idea of teacher leader to the novices and reiterate its importance throughout the coursework (p. 282).

Along these lines, while research indicates that some teachers are choosing to take advantage of relevant graduate programs across the United States and in virtual online programs (Clemson-Ingram & Fessler, 1997; Leonard, Petta, & Porter, 2012), there also exists a well-documented challenge for school districts to planfully orchestrate and support their own teacher leadership development (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Weiner, 2011). Furthermore, a recently ratified public education budget in North Carolina (i.e., for fiscal years 2013 through 2015) controversially phased-out a long-standing 10% raise for classroom teachers who earn masters degrees and additional monthly pay traditionally granted to teachers who have earned advanced degrees. The General Assembly posited that such formal education was not required for teachers to carry out their roles as educators. In this absence of any monetary reward, it appears reasonable to hypothesize that fewer teachers will be willing to invest their time and money in pursuing higher education to build their capacities as professionals.



This also seems indicative of what Mehta (2013) has highlighted as the persistent “under-professionalization” of teaching in public education. Speaking to an intense paradox in United States public education, which on the one hand has placed high hopes for education’s ability to promote social justice and mobility, while on the other, has repeatedly failed to meet its broad objectives through a rationalized system of accountability (e.g., No Child Left Behind’s 2002 mandate that 100% of children in the U.S. would be proficient in reading by 2014), Mehta states:

[T]he institutionalization of teaching as a semiprofession in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century continues to haunt the field. Teaching has been institutionalized within a hierarchically administered bureaucracy, one that leaves teachers and schools at the bottom of an increasingly long chain of implementation. Within such a structure, loose coupling has come to be seen as the problem; tightening these links through a regimen of rationalizing schooling has repeatedly been seen as the solution. This structure has also bred norms of isolation and individualism within teaching, modes that have hampered efforts of the profession as a whole to establish common norms and standards of good practice (p. 250).

In other words, a century’s old evolution of teachers serving as skilled laborers, school administrators as middle-management, and district-level leaders retaining little autonomy as off-shoots of broader public school systems that have been continually pressurized by a multitude of competing outside interests has all led to a perpetual failure of rationalized views of how high quality schools/education are measured. Moreover, the policy mandate that all teachers are to demonstrate leadership that has undergirded the rationale for this research was unleashed without a clear plan as to

how this is to be done or any clear indication that teachers would be granted autonomy to accomplish this feat. Hence, this has suggested a dire need for local school districts in North Carolina to step *out-of-the-box* in respect to their role as the linchpin for teacher leadership/professional development. Thus, herein lays the core question that provides a rationale for this study: *How are school districts in North Carolina helping teachers develop the leadership skills and capacity necessary to meet the demands of their profession?*

### **A Previous Study**

It is important to highlight that one recent dissertation conducted by Argent (2012) examined the relationship between North Carolina's mandate for teachers to demonstrate leadership and whether school districts could be effective in providing leadership training for teachers who did not perform up to the minimum standard in this area. Through this quantitative, survey-driven study, Argent (2012) used descriptive statistics to measure the extent to which teachers' perceptions on leadership changed pre- and post-participation in one large urban school districts' teacher leadership development program. This study also examined survey responses from the participants' teacher teammates and principals. Argent (2012) reported that "...although there were no significant relationships found, descriptive data did show trends of increased leadership abilities. . ." across each of the six themes of leadership that were studied. These themes were each based on the NCPTS.

In short, I chose to adopt qualitative case study methodologies to investigate the nature of a school district-led teacher leadership development program through a *bi-focal* approach—one lens was turned toward key stakeholders who had developed and implemented such a program and another lens toward the participants’ experiences through completing such a program.

### **Definition of Terms**

Below, I have included definitions for four key terms that provide context for this research study on teacher leadership development:

1. ***Culture***: In this study, culture will generally refer to how the operations of a school and/or district are driven by their norms, values, beliefs, rituals, legacies, and traditions which are collectively established over time and how this impacts the ways in which they approach various challenges that exist (Bolman & Deal, 2010).
2. ***NC Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS)***: The NCPTS are the set of standards which guide professional teaching practices in North Carolina public schools. These standards are the anchor for an evaluation system, originally known as McREL (2009), which requires teachers to annually complete a self-assessment, use that self-assessment to develop professional development goals, and then engage in a series of observations and feedback-conferences with supervising administrators and peers (i.e., a peer-observation is required once annually for early career teachers). The totality of this process is

completed for the expressed purpose of teachers being assigned “summary ratings” by their supervising administrator as part of a teacher’s annual, professional evaluation.

3. ***Professional Development:*** For the purpose of this research, the term professional development describes acts of engagement in learning opportunities, particularly as they are facilitated by local school districts, that “...engage teachers’ beliefs, experiences, and habits...” and cause teachers to “...(re)consider both their formal and their practical teaching knowledge,” (Hawley & Valli, 1999, p. 143) and leadership practices. Professional development often refers to a standalone or series of formal workshops, trainings, projects, or learning experiences that are focused on, and guided by, achieving specific goals.
4. ***Teacher Leadership:*** While formal roles of teacher leaders are discussed within this dissertation study, it is important to note that I attended more to what Lieberman and Friedrich (2010) described as, “...the core principles that are exemplified in their work,” such as, “...advocating what’s right for students,” “...opening the classroom door and going public with teaching,” “...working ‘alongside’ teachers and leading collaboratively,” “...taking a stand,” and, “...learning and reflecting on practices as a teacher and leader,” (p. 95). This conceptual definition of teacher leadership is further explicated through the

NCPTS and focuses more on the acts of teacher leaders (O'Hair & Reitzug, 1997) than any formal position they may hold.

### **Conceptual Framework for this Research**

When York-Barr and Duke (2004) completed their seminal review of teacher leadership research, they organized dozens of pertinent studies based on the extent to which they utilized theoretical frameworks or were atheoretical in design. They posited that, "Research grounded in theory is less likely to revisit what is already known and is more likely to further existing understandings and inform practice," (p. 291). Their literature review led York-Barr and Duke (2004) to conclude that theoretical frameworks hold great importance in guiding and influencing the design, analysis, and applicability of teacher leadership studies. For example, they pointedly cited research in which Smylie and Hart (2000) adopted *social capital theory* to study the role principals play in developing and maintaining their teacher leaders' social standing and influence (i.e., *social capital*) among their peers. As York-Barr and Duke (2004) noted, "...theory informed the identification of relevant variables, grounded the formation of research questions, and provided a framework for analysis, interpretation, and application of findings," (p. 291).

For the purpose of my research, the phenomenon upon which I focused can be described broadly as teachers who have attended to their abilities to enact leadership through participation in a school system sponsored teacher leadership development program. This phenomenon entailed a diverse array of contexts, namely a professional

development setting that was designed and administered by a school district; the nature of how leadership was *distributed* for the benefit of a district's teachers and students; and the nature of learning, especially in community, by teachers who participated in such a program. Taken together, this prompted my decision to adopt the theories of *distributed leadership* and *constructivist learning* to help explicate and guide my research. I will now provide brief descriptions of each of these theoretical frameworks, followed by a summary of how they have meshed together to provide a conceptual framework for my dissertation study.

### **Distributed Leadership**

As a practicing school administrator, I have encountered the penchant for some stakeholders in education to adopt a view that educational leadership can be practiced *top down*. Scholars such as Mehta (2013) and Tyack and Cuban (1995) have pointed out how this propensity to view teachers as part of a labor-management dichotomy stems from the rationalized, "one best system" of scientifically managed organizations that was thrust upon public education during the Progressive Era and still persists today. However, the essence of the NCPTS has now mandated that leadership responsibilities are to be spread amongst practitioners serving in various roles throughout the bureaucracy of public education—not only at the top. As Taylor (2008) points out, researchers had been hesitant until the past few decades to look much beyond the role of principals as the influential leadership source in schools. However, growing research in the

area of teacher leadership has further defined conceptual/theoretical frameworks meant to ground this genre of inquiry (e.g., Smylie, 2008; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). One such conceptualization that permeates recent literature on teacher leadership is *distributed leadership theory*.

According to the theory of distributed leadership, varied leadership roles and responsibilities are widely disseminated amongst schools and across the school system. In essence, principals, teachers, and district-level leaders work together to make decisions, solve problems, and accomplish results greater than what one formal leader (or set of leaders) could accomplish in isolation. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) have described this as a form of synergy that is a “...practice distributed over leaders, followers, and their situation,” (p. 27). Supporters of this framework argue that the collaborative processes of distributive leadership promulgate results greater than the sum of its parts. Distributed leadership has also been described by scholars as being similar to the conceptualizations of *shared* and *participative* forms of leadership (e.g., Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memom, & Yashkina, 2007; O'Hair & Reitzug, 1997).

Several studies have addressed the roles of distributed leadership theory in educational research. Some researchers have examined the nature of school and district leaders planning and implementing various patterns of distributed leadership (e.g., Leithwood, Mascall, et al., 2007), while others have explored how distributed

leadership affects the complementary roles played by district and teacher leaders in promoting instructional improvements (e.g., Firestone & Martinez, 2007). For the purpose of this dissertation study, it has been helpful to consider how Mayrowetz (2008) analyzed four common conceptualizations of distributed leadership that have appeared in the extant research. These variations have included: (1) a view of distribution as de-centered leadership activity; (2) the construct of distribution as democracy; (3) distributed leadership as a construct that promotes effective and efficient operations; and, (4) distributed leadership as an act of building human capacity.

**De-centered role of leadership.** Mayrowetz (2008) found that distributed leadership theory has been used to describe a de-centered approach to leadership. Along these lines, Mayrowetz found that, “the traditional conception of leadership as person- or role-based is poorly aligned to the realities of work in organizations, especially schools,” (p. 427). For example, Mayrowetz (2008) referenced a study by Timperley (2005) in which the researcher utilized a distributed leadership perspective to analyze the nature of how literacy specialists at various elementary schools interacted and collaborated with one another while deliberating over their students’ achievement on various reading tests.

**Distribution and democracy.** Distributed leadership has been interpreted as playing an important role in furthering democracy in education. However, Mayrowetz (2008) questioned the wisdom of such interpretations, citing scholarly views that merely distributing more responsibilities across a school would ultimately overburden teachers



(York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to Maxcy and Nguyen (2006, as cited in Mayrowetz, 2008), coalescing distributed leadership theory with democratic ideals may mask the realities of whose interests are actually being served through such forms of distribution. Considering the premise of a state policy in which all teachers must demonstrate leadership, it appears similarly unclear as to whether democracy is being furthered by such a mandate or whose interests are being best served by such policy (i.e., Is it students, teachers, elements of the educational bureaucracy, or other interest groups?).

**Distribution and efficiency.** Similar to studies that have focused on *de-centered* views of leadership, distributed leadership has also been used to study the nature of efficient and effective operations of schools. In this use, distribution has been seen as a framework for lessening the burdens placed upon principals to *do it all* as the leaders of their schools. Through this perspective, leadership and management roles and responsibilities (e.g., supervising bus dismissal) are redistributed to teachers and support staff to support the work of the principal. An example of this discussed by Mayrowetz (2008) was Kentucky's adoption of the States Action for Educational Leadership Project (SAELP) in which one school district instituted new lead instructional, teaching, and business management positions that were purposely created to aid in the work of their principals. However, Mayrowetz (2008) also cited scholars who have found evidence that not all individuals to whom leadership activities are distributed are competent and skilled in such a role (e.g., Kellerman, 2004). This has further indicated a need to

support the development of teachers as leaders, if they are expected to take on such responsibilities outside the realm of their instructional duties.

**Distribution as capacity-building.** Another prevalent use of the distributed perspective seemingly connected most closely to the premise of teacher leadership development has been to support studies that have examined the nature of distributed leadership as *capacity-building* in others. Explicating this use, Mayrowetz (2008) stated that:

...by having multiple people engaged in leadership, these individuals will all learn more about themselves and the issues facing the school. Eventually, the collective capacity of the organization will increase to the point that the school can address its own shortcomings (p. 431).

Moreover, Mayrowetz (2008) cited empirical evidence put forth by Copland (2003) suggesting that this type of capacity-building is indicative of leadership development. This core assumption has been echoed through other studies dealing with school leadership, teacher capacity-building, and connections to school improvement (e.g., Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Mullen & Jones, 2008).

**Further considerations of use.** Commenting on the four conceptual uses of distributed leadership theory that were explored, Mayrowetz (2008) posited that value can be found in any of these conceptions in isolation or combination, as they encompass a broad spectrum of what researchers value in education. Mayrowetz further suggested that researchers should clearly formulate what they mean by distributed leadership,

develop a framework for their study, and explain how such a study will add to the greater body of research on leadership development and school improvement. While they did not explicitly name distributed leadership as a framework for their study, Mullen and Jones (2008) have demonstrated the possibilities for blending the conceptual uses of distributed, shared, or “...democratically accountable...” leadership (p. 331). In their qualitative field studies of three high-performing elementary schools, Mullen and Jones (2008) posited that the role of the principal in capacity-building to foster teacher leadership was a bedrock of promoting democratically accountable schools. I have similarly found that the *capacity-building* notion of distributed leadership is closely connected with my case study of a school district-sponsored teacher leadership development program.

Through this lens of capacity-building, I developed a study which paid particular attention to the ways in which teachers perceive how they learn, especially in community with their colleagues. As I will discuss in Chapter Three, this was an explicit piece of the question set I used when interviewing teachers after they had completed a year-long leadership development program. It seemed reasonable to assume that such a view of capacity-building honors and elevates teachers’ roles in the capacity-building process itself. In other words, I was not solely focused on what responsibilities and activities a school district might promote through leadership-focused professional development, but rather the vast possibilities that exist in terms of how teachers actively assimilate and perceive this type of information as relates to their own lived

experiences. It was for this reason that I also looked toward *constructivist learning theory* as a way of further explicating my conceptual framework for this study.

### **Constructivist Theory of (Teacher) Learning**

Theories of how we learn vary in the ways that they describe the nature of how we know and how we make meaning of the world around us. More specifically, prominent theories of learning in education have fallen along a continuum from *complicated* to *complex* (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000). Complicated learning theories approximate a behavioral approach to learning, much like the work of cognitive psychologist, B. F. Skinner, as well as the cognitive lens furthered by Piaget (1970). Here, learning is seen through the lens of performing tasks, solving problems, and ordering assumptions based on cognitions: thoughts of what is known and how things work. Complicated learning theories contend that cognition is a driving force, analagous to how computer chips take in information, process it, and output the new and correct action for a situation.

On the other end of the spectrum, while complex theories of learning do consider the role of mind and behaviors, they also conceptualize the ways in which mind, body, and environment interact to promulgate forms of synergy. In other words, the whole of learning and knowing is greater than the sum of its parts for both the learner and the learned (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000). Moreover, complexity theories—particularly when viewing the dynamics of an entire system—characterize a flow of information among agent and surroundings along various, intertwined patterns

(O'Day, 2002). Thus a negotiation of sorts with one's community and surroundings causes the co-construction of new knowledge and adaptation between learners and the social/physical world that surrounds them.

**Learning theory and teacher professional development.** Considering the phenomenon of teacher professional development, constructivist theory helps illuminate the ongoing and active role that teachers have in learning and adapting their professional knowledge and perspective to meet the vast situational needs that arise. Furthermore, in as much as leadership is a social act, constructivist theory situates learning and adaptation in collective terms. Teachers *adapt* and *lead* within their social and physical surroundings. This is why, in part, a constructivist view of learning has been linked to notions of teacher leadership (Spillane, 2002).

This differs from complicated learning theories—such as behaviorism and mentalism—that conceptualize learning as an act with which we acquire new knowledge (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000, p. 60). Considering the phenomenon of teacher professional development, this sort of theory of learning might view teachers as passive *empty vessels* that workshop trainers, for instance, must fill as they impart their knowledge on a given topic. Learning is viewed in this light as a passive act, and it is therefore incumbent upon the teacher to perform the necessary work that causes learning to occur. Though simplistic as this may seem, this view resembles prevalent notions of teaching and learning that have historically pervaded our public school systems (Spillane, 2002; Spring, 2005). I found this dilemma particularly interesting as it

points toward a sort of paradox between prevailing and antiquated beliefs on teaching and learning and teacher leadership development: *If learners viewed their role in learning as passive, how could they ever come to know what it takes to apply what they have learned as a leader?*

**Theories of learning and the role of the school district.** One study that typifies the importance of adopting a view of teacher learning in the context of teacher professional development was conducted by Spillane (2002). This research examined the nature of how school district officials who led their system's professional development initiatives viewed the ways in which teachers learn. When explaining the rationale for this research, Spillane (2002) posited that "School districts are not only interpreters of others' policies, but also makers of their own policies and programs which are designed to guide teachers' instructional practices," (p. 377). Spillane's (2002) study utilized quantitative and qualitative methodologies of inquiry to address the extent to which school district officials viewed teacher learning through a *behavioral, cognitive, or situated* lens. Spillane's (2002) theoretical framework suggested that the behavioral and cognitive lenses of learning were associated with complicated theories of learning (i.e., scholars such as Skinner and Piaget), whereas situated learning exemplified theories of complexity (e.g., constructivist learning) and indicated pockets of viewpoints in the district which supported and "believed in" teacher leadership.

Upon analysis of the predominantly interview based data, Spillane (2002) found that a majority of school district officials (e.g., curriculum directors, human resource managers, and principals) adopted a behaviorist view of teacher learning. In fact, of the 40 officials interviewed, 34 communicated views about the nature of professional development and teacher learning that approximated a behaviorist perspective. Along the same vein, district officials viewed teachers as being mostly motivated by external rewards and sanctions and maintaining no real vested interests in implementing reforms once they returned to their classrooms after professional development sessions were completed. Moreover, these district-level change agents shared a prevailing view of *showing and telling* as their predominant view of professional development. Spillane (2002) also noted that this archetype view was distinctly missing any mention of the role of a teacher's voice in driving their own learning.

While certainly in the minority, five of the 40 district officials viewed teacher learning through a *situated perspective*. Those sharing this view believed that teachers generally engage in active learning and are intrinsically motivated to implement what they have learned. These district leaders viewed teacher learning as a social act, and they valued the teacher's voice in driving their own learning. In addition, those ascribing to the situated perspective believed that teachers were motivated intrinsically to learn, develop, and improve for the sake of their students and schools. It is here where Spillane (2002) illustrated how situated learning and teacher leadership were closely connected.

## Connecting Leadership and Learning

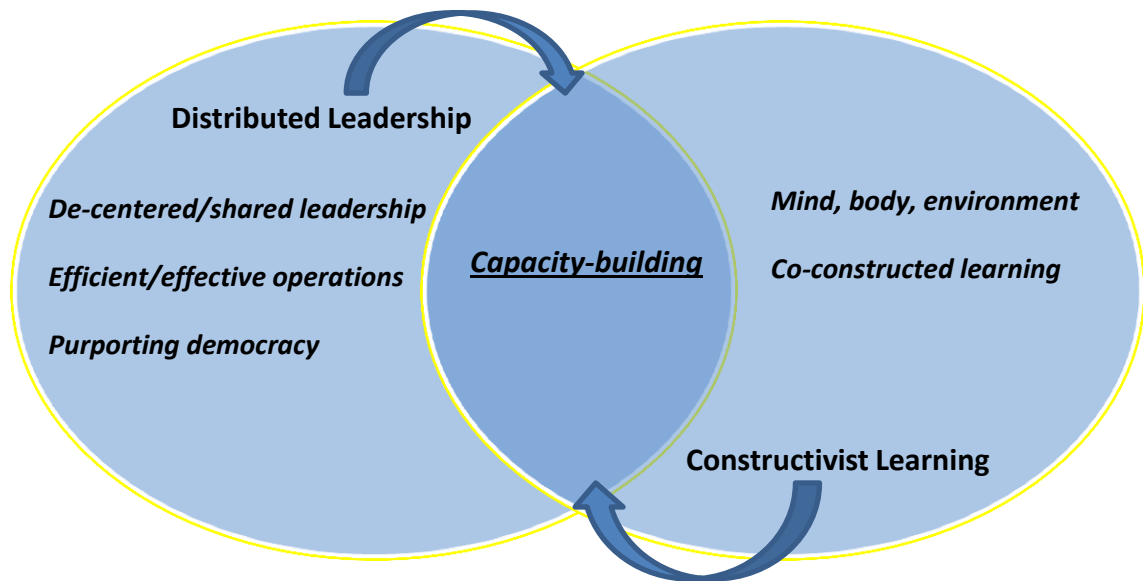
Distributed leadership theory and constructivist learning each serve unique purposes in guiding educational research. Distributed leadership theory has helped explicate ways in which school districts and teacher leaders relate to and support one another in striving toward common goals of school and district improvement. This has also suggested the possibilities that distributed forms of leadership hold for promoting teacher leadership and building capacity in others. I have found constructivist learning theory beneficial in framing the complex and social ways in which teacher learning and professional development are intertwined and coalesce around the construct of teacher leadership development as a form of capacity-building. Therefore, I have provided Figure 1 (on page 20) to illustrate the conceptual framework that I have adopted for this study.

For the purpose of this study of teacher leadership development, Figure 1 illustrates how I explored research questions and data through a *lens of capacity-building* that is explicated through the intersection of distributed leadership and constructivist views of teacher learning. This conceptual framework was not intended to overlook the multitude of ways that distributed leadership and constructivist learning theory have guided educational leadership research or to discount the potential links between distributed leadership and promoting democracy (e.g., Mullen & Jones, 2008). Rather, this lens allowed me to analyze and learn from the ways in which teachers believed they were learning and growing as leaders within a professional environment



which has mandated that leadership must be distributed amongst formal school leaders and classroom teachers.

Figure 1. The Intersection of Distributed Leadership and Constructivist Learning.



Through this lens, I addressed the underlying question: *What is the nature of how experiences in a teacher leadership development program might support the capacity-building of teachers as leaders, stemming from the policy mandate that all teachers must demonstrate leadership?* Furthermore (and as I will discuss later in this manuscript), this bi-focal approach to inquiry allowed me to triangulate (Lichtman, 2013) what a school district viewed as its role and methods for developing their teachers as leaders with how their teachers perceived their experiences in such a professional development endeavor, the ways in which they learned in this setting, and

the extent to which these experiences met teachers' prior expectations for how the program would impact their practice and abilities.

### **Setting and Questions for Research**

As a former special education teacher, a practicing public school principal, and a doctoral student in an educational leadership graduate program, my interest in teacher leadership development has grown immensely over the past decade. Furthermore, as I have described through this introduction to my study, I have become concerned with the pressing need for local school districts to support teachers as they *retool* at various stages of their careers and, perhaps for the first time, establish themselves as teacher leaders. Through the intersection of my professional and academic pursuits, I developed a strong interest in conducting a study of how school districts are approaching this unique problem.

In addressing the issue of selecting where research might take place, Spillane (2002) discussed how site selection for a study on teacher learning was based on what Firestone (1989) termed "active use districts." Active use districts have been referred to as sites that are well known for approaches and activities that earn them a reputation for instructional innovation. Along these lines, I developed an interest in studying one specific teacher leadership development program—situated within a smaller, racially-diverse school district in the Piedmont region of North Carolina—in order to examine how school systems might help their teachers respond to the mandate that all teachers must demonstrate leadership.

The particular school district I chose as the setting for this research might be considered *active use* as it has been involved in numerous system-wide professional development and technology grant opportunities. Moreover, implementing a formal teacher leadership development program indicated that this district has, at a minimum, been proactive in addressing North Carolina's mandate that all teachers must demonstrate leadership. In the spirit of full disclosure, I first came to know of this district and its program while serving there as an assistant principal during the two years prior to when I began this study. For the purpose of this dissertation manuscript, I will refer to the program that I studied as the "Teacher Leadership Development Program (TLDP)," which is a pseudonym that is meant to protect the confidentiality of those who participated in my study.

Since its inception in 2010, the school system where this research was based used Title II federal funds in order to sponsor approximately 25 teachers per school year to participate in TLDP. Teachers were selected proportionally from each of the system's schools by way of administrative recommendation to a district committee. Participants of TLDP attended eight all-day sessions led by various presenters and engaged in learning opportunities and activities that were based around a variety of leadership-focused themes. Sessions included topics such as navigating conflict and school culture, building effective collaborative teacher teams, and various practices that promote shared decision-making, instructional improvement, and the systemic adoption of change. Concurrent to the professional development sessions and some assigned

supplemental readings, cohort participants were also required to plan and implement a culminating teacher leadership project, typically in groups of two to three teachers. Examples of such projects included piloting student-led conferences, school transition initiatives that connected at-risk 5<sup>th</sup> graders with teachers at the middle school level, and teachers investigating ways to promote increased academic rigor and a college-going culture for would-be first generation college students.

Stemming from my interest in TLDP and a conceptual framework that focuses on capacity-building as the intersection of distributed leadership and constructivist views of learning, I focused on four questions to guide my research study:

1. What is the nature of a teacher leadership development program sponsored by a local school district and how do district-level leaders perceive that such a program relates to their role in distributing leadership among teachers in their school system?
2. How have teachers' views of what teacher leadership is (e.g., What does it mean? How is it enacted?) perhaps changed and/or developed as related to participating in their school district's teacher leadership development program?
3. What is the nature of how teachers learn about leadership as related to their participation in a district-sponsored teacher leadership development program?
4. What can we learn from the experiences of teachers who have participated in a district-sponsored teacher leadership development program that might inform the practice of other school systems and related organizations?

### **Preview of Subsequent Chapters**

In Chapter Two, a literature review about the nature of teacher leadership and professional development is presented. This review will examine various themes about teacher leadership, including an historical perspective, varied definitions that exist, challenges with enacting this type of leadership, and how the NCPTS drives the mandate that all teachers must lead. Various examples found in the literature of teacher leadership development pathways and approaches to studying teacher professional development will also be discussed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three will focus on research methodologies that were utilized for this study, including an overview description of the foundations of qualitative and case study research methods, the design of this study, and methods that were used to collect and analyze data. My positionality as a researcher and the intersubjectivity which therefore existed throughout this study will also be presented in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four will focus on the *distributed lens* of capacity building and research findings from a district-level perspective of teacher leadership development will be presented. These findings will be based on interviews I conducted with four district leaders and a review of various documents to which they granted me access. Findings from these data focus on the nature of the Teacher Leadership Development Program (TLDP) that the district implemented, district leaders' varied perspectives about TLDP, and their views on the constructs of *distributed leadership* and *teacher leadership*.

Chapter Five will focus on the *constructivist learning lens* of capacity-building. Findings will be presented from a survey I conducted of teachers about to begin TLDP's fourth cohort, interviews I conducted with seven of these teachers who acted as key informants before and after they completed TLDP, and an analysis of the archived end-of-program written reflections to which I was granted access by the district and that spanned the four-year history of TLDP. Findings from these data focus on the nature of what and how participants historically learned about teacher leadership through TLDP, how key informants' views of teacher leadership developed through TLDP, what their perceptions were of the program, and how they perceived the ways in which districts can provide effective professional development for its teachers.

In Chapter Six, major conclusions of this study will be discussed and several recommendations to practitioners will be presented about the ways in which school systems might set about establishing their own frameworks for teacher leadership development. Chapter Six will also pay special attention to the ways in which distributed leadership and constructivist views of learning related through this research as well as the manner in which TLDP aligned and misaligned with some scholars' views on the underprofessionalization of teaching. The final chapter will conclude with my brief reflections about this dissertation and a statement of my areas of interest for future research and work in the profession.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I will present a review of extant literature that focuses upon the construct of teacher leadership development. This literature review has been organized around four themes, including: (a) an exploration of an historical perspective of teacher leadership; (b) an examination of the nature of, and challenges with, enacting teacher leadership; (c) an analysis of how the NCPTS have helped drive the mandate in North Carolina that teachers must demonstrate leadership; and (d) an examination of studies that have focused on various teacher leadership development pathways as well as the general nature of teacher professional development.

#### **Historical Perspective of Teacher Leadership**

The roles of teacher leaders have experienced distinct periods of change over the past several decades (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Considering a progression from the days of the 19<sup>th</sup> century single-room school to the rise of complex forms of educational governance (Mehta, 2013; Spring, 2005), the more modern notions of teacher leadership have taken on several conspicuous forms and characterizations (Hatch, White, & Faigenbaum, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Shifting towards a paradigm whereby all teachers enact leadership may also require a break from longstanding practices of isolationism (Spring, 2005) and steadfast egalitarianism (Weiner, 2011) as

well as lingering stereotyped beliefs about the role of women in public school teaching (Grant & Murray, 1999, as cited in Berry, Byrd, & Wieder, 2013). Similarly, such a shift may be necessary in order to elevate the tenor and capacity of the profession and therefore impact what has historically existed as an under-professionalized field of practice (Mehta, 2013).

An awareness of the characteristics and purposes of teacher leadership catapulted forward in the 1980's and 1990's, due in part to The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy's (1986) *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, a seminal work calling for a new wave of classroom teachers who would embrace a central role in school reform (Mullen & Jones, 2008; Frost, 2012). In addition to promoting new roles for classroom teachers, this report called for school improvement reform that enhanced the decision-making capacity and responsibilities of classroom teachers and viewed the role of classroom teachers as a critical component in improving schools in the United States (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Moreover, pressures during the 1990's emanating from corporations and economic special interests impacted the broader educational community's move toward the resurgence of a business model of school governance and improvement (Peck & Reitzug, 2012).

In their case study of the unique and pervasive manner in which four teacher leaders involved with the National Writing Project have influenced policy, practice, and teacher-led research, Hatch, White, and Faigenbaum (2005) described four periods of the ways that teacher leadership has evolved through the years. They summarized the



historical stages of teacher leadership as follows: (1) principals assigned trusted teachers to the role of department heads, usually to assist principals with carrying out top-down decision- and policy-making; (2) curriculum/staff developer positions were created that increasingly recognized teachers as experts in the profession; (3) the advent of formal colleague support roles such as mentor teachers came to pass; and then presently, 4) the distributed leadership model emerged in which a wider range of leadership responsibilities have been spread throughout a school community, transcending formal title or distinction. When related to K-12 public schools, distributed leadership has been described as principals and teachers sharing responsibilities for data analysis, professional development, and school improvement activities and initiatives, regardless of formal titles or distinctions (Harris, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Leithwood, Mascal, et al., 2007; Mayrowetz, 2008).

Scholarly views on the phenomenon of teacher leadership have been a point of debate amongst some scholars (Barth, 2007; O'Hair & Reitzug, 1997). In their expansive review of the literature, York-Barr and Duke (2004) summarized 20 years of research on the actions, contributions, and functions of teacher leaders and concluded that scholarly works have examined various “dimensions of practice” of teacher leaders (p. 266).

These dimensions include:

- Coordination and management functions, such as organizing special events and daily schedules, as well as contributing to faculty/leadership meetings;
- Curricular leadership at the school or district level, such as mapping outcomes and standards, and developing local curriculum guides;

- Providing professional development for fellow teachers in the form of mentoring, peer coaching, modeling best-practices, and leading workshops;
- Active participation in school change and reform efforts, including decision-making about school improvement, collaboration with peers, engaging in action-oriented/school-based research, and challenging the status quo;
- Engaging in matters of parent participation and community involvement;
- Contributing to the teaching profession, e.g., through professional organizations or political involvement;
- Participating in pre-service teacher development, e.g., by supervising and mentoring student-teachers, as well as fostering relationships with colleges and universities.

A mandate such as that in North Carolina that all teachers must demonstrate leadership presents some logical challenges. Chief among these are that school districts, principals, and teachers themselves must coalesce their practices in ways that provide ample opportunities for all teachers to enact leadership. Moreover, the necessary supports and professional development for those teachers who are not yet able to do so must also be provided. The following sections will examine the nature of these challenges.

### **Challenges of Enacting Teacher Leadership**

In this section, I will discuss a variety of challenges discussed in the extant research that have faced teachers attempting to enact leadership. This will include challenges related to adults learning to lead adults and a brief discussion about democracy and teacher leadership.

## Leading Colleagues

As teacher leaders' roles and responsibilities have evolved, school districts in the United States have more readily employed educators in non-supervisory instructional roles, often called lead teachers, instructional facilitators, or curricular specialists (Mangin and Stoelinga, 2008). Emanating from these non-supervisory, school-based, instructional roles is a leadership practice of *coaching*. Coaching has been described in the context of school organization as educators who provide direct instructional leadership through the lens of non-supervisory, non-evaluative roles (Taylor, 2008). Taylor contextualized coaching as roles such as mentor, peer teacher, and curriculum specialist, whereby instructional leadership can be enacted with the intent of improving colleagues' professional practices, yet without the added element of formal performance appraisal.

Engagement in non-supervisory, instructional leadership roles has also been shown to present challenges for coaches in the ability to conduct what some researchers have termed "crucial conversations" (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2011). This challenge was observed by Lord, Cress, and Miller (2008) during their 3-year qualitative study of teacher leaders working in support of the National Science Foundation's initiative to reform urban school systems in math and science. What emerged from their study were data suggesting that non-supervisory instructional coaches have an inherently difficult time delivering "hard feedback," even when they were coaching teachers who were perceived as quite eager to learn and receive such

messages (p. 55). Here, Lord, Cress, and Miller quoted one teacher leader who commented on the nuances and challenges of teaching fellow adults:

It requires a little bit more patience to work with adults than it does with the children. You have more authority with children. You have to develop a rapport with [adults], and a level of respect where they will listen to what you're saying, and value what you say. And you have to do that in such a way that it's palatable (p. 70).

In reporting findings from their study, Lord, Cress, and Miller (2008) highlighted that a majority of teacher leaders discussed their need to further develop skills *on-the-job* that were necessary for providing constructive feedback and coaching teachers toward improvement. Furthermore, the researchers noted that school district officials admittedly hired *lesser* qualified candidates for such jobs, often times choosing candidates from within their own districts based on criteria such as knowing and abiding by their school system's culture, being established in the community, and being perceived as trustworthy. These findings led the authors to suggest first, that a more rigorous candidate search process may have been beneficial in identifying people with more expansive instructional leadership/coaching abilities; and, secondly, that although formal teacher leadership training was not provided by their district, the teacher leaders participating in this study could have benefited from rigorous, pre-service professional development opportunities to enhance their abilities to coach others and lead change.

One of my research findings indicated that even though they never envisioned a leadership development program that would spur the formation of some elite group in

their school system, district-level leaders were proud of how most of their non-supervisory teacher leader roles had been filled by teachers who had previously completed TLDP. This paradox illuminated an interesting connection with findings such as those put forth by Lord, Cress, and Miller (2008).

Further considering the challenges of leading colleagues, Camburn (2010) found through a survey-driven, quantitative study of teachers' reflective and collaborative practices that a majority of teachers were more likely to choose collaboration with peers than with formal coaches or teachers in leadership positions on matters of curriculum and professional practice. Participants in Camburn's (2010) study also reported that they were more likely to collaborate *with* colleagues than to engage in formal observations of their colleagues—which is one of the required pieces of the NCPTS/evaluation process for early-career teachers. Analysis of the above-mentioned studies suggests important questions about how prepared teachers in North Carolina are to fulfill the mandate that every teacher must demonstrate leadership and the extent to which local districts are providing sufficient and effective professional development opportunities for teachers to support them in regards to this mandate.

### **Democracy and the Status Quo**

What about teachers who have the capacity and the drive to lead and yet hold strong beliefs that run counter to the educational organization of which they are a part? One informative case study conducted by Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan (2000) demonstrated some inherent challenges faced by teacher leaders who were conflicted by, or who

contested the status quo. Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) utilized descriptive case study methodology based on interviews and biographical data to examine ways in which three teachers had decided to enact leadership from within the boundaries of their classrooms. They considered each set of case data individually, as well as comparatively across the case subjects, to describe various components of teacher leadership and the challenges that these teachers faced in attempting to enact leadership. They concluded that teacher leaders must “...navigate the structure of schools, nurture relationships, model professional growth, help others with change...” and elevate children’s voices to “...challenge the status quo,” (p. 779). Moreover, they found that none of the three teachers studied were able to sufficiently navigate these challenges. In fact, two of these three teacher leaders elected to leave the teaching profession altogether by the time the study was published, citing their propensity for challenging the status quo and their overly burdensome frustration with their school organizations as the prime reasons they left. The only one of the three case subjects who remained with their school cited his inclination to simply “...play by the rules,” (p. 802).

Through analysis of their case studies, Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) also suggested three ways to support teacher leadership development. This included: (1) forming university-school system partnerships known as *professional development schools* in which pre-service teachers have internship and mentorship opportunities where they can learn to better understand the perspectives of their students; (2) encouraging school organizations to foster solidarity between teachers and principals

for the betterment of students resulting in “. . . a genuine colleagueship between teachers and principals that results when the solitary authority of the principal is replaced with the collective authority of the faculty,” (p. 800); and (3) reforming school culture to promote teacher leadership in ways that challenge the traditional structure of schools and model democracy through increased sharing of power and responsibility across faculties.

Some scholars (e.g., Taylor, 2008) have indicated that Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan’s (2000) study was pivotal in informing their later research on teacher leadership development and managing/resolving conflict in the school setting. In one such study, Achinstein (2002) extended the premise of conflict in schools to a comparative case study of two schools with exemplary practices of collaboration amongst faculty/staff and a team-oriented approach to improving teaching and learning. Achinstein’s (2002) study provided qualitative data that suggested that conflict is central to collaboration and that such collaboration is more effective in helping teachers work toward common professional goals when teams of teachers at a given school are able to embrace and thrive on conflict. Here conflict was seen as constructive, an integral part of the micro-political organization, and essential to promoting a democratic school community.

Considering the distinct chance that some teachers will not want to *play by the rules* and may harbor views and motivations that are contrary to school/district status quo, I have come to question the extent to which all teachers in North Carolina will be genuinely supported by their principals and school districts in enacting leadership.

Examples of similarly inconsistent or incoherent support for the role of teacher leaders were uncovered through a case study of a program called teacher connector (TC) completed by Weiner (2011). Findings from this qualitative study reinforced the influence of professional norms such as egalitarianism (i.e., teachers did not want to appear different in skills, expertise, or influence than their colleagues). Weiner's (2011) study brought to light some difficulties that teachers may face in enacting leadership among their peers and/or appearing to challenge the status quo of their schools/school systems. Findings from this study also mirrored those by Lord, Cress, and Miller (2008) in asserting the importance of providing critical feedback to support teachers' growth as practitioners and leaders.

Building a democratic school community has been viewed by some as a strenuous (Mullen & Jones, 2008) and courageous (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) undertaking by formal school leaders that permeates the very core of providing a just and caring education for students (O'Hair & Reitzug, 1997). O'Hair, McLaughlin, and Reitzug (2000) concluded from their extensive work with teacher leaders that as a school community evolves from *conventional* to *democratic* practices, teachers' roles and responsibilities necessarily evolve from a focus on teaching, learning, daily operations, and the well-being of the students as they occur within the four walls of their classrooms, to expanding their spheres of influence to encompass leadership in the classroom, school, and community settings. However, the extent to which school



districts are sufficiently supporting and developing such democratic transformations of their schools remains unclear (Carlson, 2007).

### **Capacity-Building and PLC as Teacher Leadership**

One prominent rationale in the literature for teachers serving as leaders is that teachers in synergistic collaboration with one another can be the drivers of *professional learning communities (PLCs)*, and that PLCs in turn have the power to collectively drive continuous school improvement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Drawing upon their experiences with qualitative research in the field of teacher leadership, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) described PLCs as a vehicle for promoting teacher leadership through distinct practices such as building organizational capacity, modeling democratic communities, empowering teachers, and enhancing teacher professionalism. They have also suggested that when considering the relatively frequent turnover of school administrators, the PLC/collaborative learning model holds special importance since teacher leaders are the ones who typically remain employed at a given school long enough for school improvement initiatives to actually take hold when compared with the typically shorter tenure of principals at one given school.

Studies have emerged that highlight the promise that teacher collaboration holds for driving teacher leadership (e.g., Mullen & Jones, 2008), innovation (e.g., Frost, 2012), and learning (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Along these lines, Goddard, Goddard, and Tschannen-Moran (2007) laid claim to early empirical evidence of the need for schools

and districts to support teacher professional collaboration in working towards school-wide improvements. In their study, the researchers compared survey data collected from teachers two months before their students were administered mandatory statewide assessments with the ensuing achievement scores of that district's 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. The researchers concluded that their hypothesis had merit, as 4<sup>th</sup> grade test scores on the mandatory reading and math assessments were higher at schools where teachers had reported more frequent collaboration with their colleagues.

Within their extensive literature review on teacher learning and professional development, Opfer and Pedder (2011) concluded that while the emergence of professional communities is an important example of teachers' professional learning, "...the relationship between collaboration and changes in teacher behavior emerges as a correlational one in the research that focuses on professional development activities," (p. 385). Thus, Opfer and Pedder (2011) have pointed toward the importance of considering the many "nested" systems of learning that occur for teachers—the individual, the team, the school, the system, and the sociopolitical environment of public education (p. 379)—when seeking to identify causal relationships between professional development and teacher learning. This finding parallels part of Mehta's (2013) thesis that the teaching profession has been historically influenced by a myriad of policy-makers and stakeholders who have influenced the nature of the field from *outside* the realm of public education systems. The theme presented by Opfer and

Pedder (2011) also bears similarities to my adopted framework discussed in Chapter One that focuses in part on constructivist views of teacher learning.

In considering a blended view of teacher leadership and learning, one study conducted by Frost (2012) examined teacher collaboration and leadership through the building of a professional development network. In this study, Frost (2012) examined the *International Teacher Leadership Project*—a professional development organization that spans 15 nations and that was built on the HertsCam Network, a UK-based model for school reform predicated on support for teacher leadership. Here, Frost (2012) examined progress made thus far by the International Leadership Project (of which he has been an integral leader). Through this study, Frost (2012) explored professional development opportunities which arise from teacher leaders and subsequently described an emerging theory of educational innovation. This theory described innovation-centered professional growth for teachers whereby knowledge-building, culture-building, and teacher leadership each contribute critical components to ongoing school innovation and reform. Furthermore, Frost (2012) suggested that approaches to teacher leadership development that are dependent on the addition of formal role and responsibilities are problematic, as apportioning such roles requires the availability of (often scarce) funding for such endeavors. Frost (2012) contended that while perhaps the United States is better equipped than some nations to fund additional teacher leaders' positions, the innovation-centered model could promote wide-scale, substantive, and ongoing professional growth for teachers on an international scale.

I will now turn to an analysis of the NCPTS. Here I will discuss ways in which this set of standards calls for teachers to demonstrate leadership in order to meet the demands of their profession. This discussion is meant to provide further context for my research study, as the content and spirit of the NCPTS indeed drives the need for teachers in North Carolina to engage in effective professional development experiences that support their growth as leaders.

### **The NCPTS: A New Vision for Teaching and Learning**

In a research report published by Educational Testing Service (ETS), Jackson, Burrus, Basseett, and Roberts (2010) cited areas all across the United States (e.g., Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Kansas, Illinois, and Louisiana) whereby legislation was recently enacted that either created formal teacher leader roles or set criteria for teaching licensure that recognized teachers as certified/credentialed leaders. As Poekert (2012) has stated, “Clearly, teacher leadership is gaining significant traction in the educational arenas of both policy and practice,” (p. 169). For example, Cannata, McCrory, Sykes, Anagnostopoulos, and Frank (2010) concluded through a survey-based study of faculties at 47 elementary schools in two states that teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (i.e., *National Board Certified Teachers*) enacted greater amounts of leadership at the school and district levels than did their non-Board certified colleagues. North Carolina is one such area of the United States where teacher leadership is now formally evaluated by school districts as an area of professional competence.

In 2006, the North Carolina State Board of Education adopted a new vision for public education and updated sets of professional standards that called for a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to teaching, learning, and leadership (McREL, 2009). In fact, the guiding State Board policy (policy ID number TCP-C-006) calls for all school-based, licensed professionals to demonstrate leadership in their roles. This includes classroom teachers, school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and media and technology specialists.

Much of North Carolina's 21<sup>st</sup> century vision and policy was based on research promoting standards-based educational practices by the Mid-continent Research for Education Learning (McREL, 2009), a report on the effects of school leadership upon student learning by the Wallace Foundation (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003), and the *P-21 framework* for teaching and learning (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). In part, this new vision for education and an updated set of professional standards were based on promoting skills and dispositions that have been viewed heavily by the corporate world as those most critical to students' future success in the world economy (Toth, 2009). These skills have been described as students building a strong awareness of digital/media literacy, financial literacy, and entrepreneurialism as well as other more pervasive skills, such as leadership and communication skills, critical thinking skills, and the ability to collaborate with others and complete projects (NCPTS, 2009).

## Examining the NCPTS

Stemming from the state's adoption of a *21<sup>st</sup> century framework*, North Carolina instituted a new set of professional standards to guide the practice, evaluation, and professional growth of its public school teachers (NCPTS). These professional standards were named as follows:

1. Teachers demonstrate leadership.
2. Teachers establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students.
3. Teachers know the content they teach.
4. Teachers facilitate learning for their students.
5. Teachers reflect on their practice.
6. Teachers contribute to the academic success of students.

Each of these standards is broken down further into elements, and then indicators, that explicate a broad set of core practices meant to describe teachers on a continuum of professional performance and inform the assignment of annual ratings of teachers' performances by their respective school administrators. The performance-based ratings for standards one through five are: *not demonstrated; developing; proficient; accomplished; and distinguished*. Standard six contains possible ratings of *meets, exceeds, or does not meet expected growth*, and is calculated based on a type of *value-added* data (Amrein-Beardsley, 2009; McCaffrey, Han, & Lockwood, 2009). This type of data-based rating purports to measure teacher effectiveness via a rolling, three-year average of how well a teacher's students perform on annual standardized tests when compared to the achievement patterns of all other students across the state.

## Teachers Demonstrate Leadership

Standard 1 of the NCPTS—*Teachers Demonstrate Leadership*—can be characterized broadly as a set of practices that imply active, ethical engagement in the teaching profession (McREL, 2009). The five elements included in Standard 1 provide an overview for how teachers must enact leadership, and they include:

- A. Teachers lead in their classrooms.
- B. Teachers demonstrate leadership in the school.
- C. Teachers lead in the teaching profession.
- D. Teachers advocate for schools and students.
- E. Teachers demonstrate high ethical standards.

The indicators embedded in each of these elements include a broad set of practices such as: effective classroom management that fosters student collaboration; consistency with effective lesson planning; contributing to a positive school climate that fosters collegiality, collaboration, and professional growth; service and leadership on school improvement committees; and, active engagement in developing school policies and practices that improve student learning. In Appendix A, I have listed all elements and indicators included in Standard 1. This is meant to demonstrate the continuum of performance ratings that are included in the NCPTS. As such, indicators are ordered from top to bottom for each element to represent professional ratings of *developing*, *proficient*, *accomplished*, and *distinguished*.

While Standard 1 certainly drives the mandate in North Carolina that all teachers must demonstrate leadership, it is also evident that teacher leadership permeates much of the NCPTS. This is established by the fact that 12 of 20 elements embedded in

standards two through five include indicators that describe ways in which teachers may demonstrate leadership beyond the borders of their classroom (Achinstein, 2002) in order to be rated at the *distinguished* level (McREL, 2009). As teachers are required only to demonstrate ratings of at least *proficient* or higher across all standards to maintain gainful employment in NC public schools, *distinguished* levels of performance appear mainly to characterize superlative practices that are demonstrated by relatively few practitioners in the profession. However, recent political posturing by the NC General Assembly and the National Education Association (NEA, 2014; Robertson, 2014, February 25) indicated a possibility that differentiated pay scales for teachers based in part on the results of their summary evaluations could eventually take hold. As such, I have presented a chart fully listing the 12 elements and indicators of *distinguished* practice that seemingly describe teachers enacting leadership in Appendix B. What these indicators characterize are teachers who possess the skill, expertise, personality, and drive to lead not only their students toward improvement but also their colleagues, schools, and school districts. I will now turn to an examination of teacher leadership development and the nature of studying teacher professional development.

### **Variations of Teacher Leadership Development**

The challenges of preparing teachers not only to promote student achievement, but to also take on the immense challenges of leadership, provide a backdrop for a major need in public schools across the United States and beyond: professional development in support of teacher leadership. Explicating the need for this support,



Leithwood, Mascall, et al. (2007) have stated that “The likelihood of teacher leadership is also increased when teachers have access to professional development aimed at developing the skills and knowledge they will require to effectively enact leadership roles,” (p. 50). In this section, I will examine a variety of studies in the extant research that have focused on different pathways to teacher leadership development. This will include formal college/university-based teacher leadership programs, job-embedded professional development, and professional development that is led by local school districts.

### **University-Based Programs**

One formal pathway to teacher leadership development has emerged in university/graduate school settings. It is evident that studies in this area have often been conducted by researchers who also have vested interests in the departments and programs being examined (e.g., Clemson-Ingram & Fessler, 1997; Leonard, Petta, and Porter, 2012; Searby & Shaddix, 2008; Taylor et al., 2011). To better understand the contexts around which such programs have been developed, it has been helpful to consider a recent review of 21 graduate teacher leadership programs in the United States by Leonard, Petta, and Porter (2012). These researchers utilized website material and interviews to identify the make-up of each program included in their study. Leonard et al. developed a conceptual framework to evaluate the extent to which teacher leadership programs promoted *roles and traits* of teacher leaders and/or practices that fostered *teacher effectiveness*. Roles and traits of teacher leaders were

defined in the contexts of leading within a group, collaborating professionally, and enacting leadership inside/outside of the classroom. Developing teacher effectiveness was defined in this study as practices that move teachers toward an ability to understand quantitative student performance data and apply this to the adoption of instructional practices which foster student achievement.

Leonard et al. (2012) were disheartened by their findings of low enrollment in many of the programs that were examined, especially since they had designed this study as a precursor to beginning a new teacher leadership development program at their own university. While they concluded that this perhaps signaled a need for improved marketing at the institutions included in their research, they also posited that a perceived lack of earning potential for teacher leaders perhaps tempered demand for such a program. Unfortunately, deflated compensation for classroom teachers who pursue masters' degrees and continue to stay in the classroom also undergirds the context of North Carolina's mandate that all teachers must demonstrate leadership. What effect this has on future graduate school enrollment poses an important question that is beyond the scope of this particular research study.

One recent qualitative study conducted by Bradley-Levine (2011) examined the nature of participants' own experiences in a graduate-level teacher leadership program. This mixed-method case study followed a cohort of teachers as they participated in a master of teacher leadership program. Bradley-Levine (2011) relied heavily on ethnographic study (Glesne, 2011, p. 17) of eight key informants in triangulating results,

along with coursework/document review, and participant-observation of graduate class sessions. Each of the key informants explained their views on teacher leadership and their motivation for pursuing this sort of advanced degree.

Based on this study, Bradley-Levine (2011) critiqued the manner in which some teacher leadership graduate programs have seemingly rebranded *school* leadership programs as *teacher* leadership programs. The specific program examined in this study, situated in the Midwestern United States, utilized curriculum that was heavy in educational leadership theory but light in readings and experiences geared towards teachers managing conflict, advocating for students, or navigating collegial relationships while enacting leadership. This left a majority of key informants feeling ill-prepared to lead within the context of their current positions. This qualitative data was also reminiscent of studies conducted by Achinstein (2002) who concluded that PLCs should embrace/navigate conflict as a pathway to positive school reform as well as Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) whose case study subjects often experienced insurmountable conflict within the status quo of their school settings. These connections further demonstrate the importance of professional development that promotes teachers' conflict management and resolution skills. The extant literature indicates little evidence of this skillset currently being taught in pre-service/teacher leadership programs.

Furthermore, considering the expectations and lived experiences that participants might have as part of a teacher leadership development program, it was

interesting that only one of Bradley-Levine's (2011) eight key informants—a special education teacher—reported a desire to leverage what she had learned in the graduate program to enact leadership and advocate for her students as a classroom teacher. In fact, seven out of eight participants cited goals such as transitioning to school administration, having other types of influence across their school setting (e.g., knowing how to influence colleagues), or seeking other forms of career advancement outside of the classroom as their post-graduation goals. Bradley-Levine (2011) concluded that these results indicated a need for teacher leadership development programs that empower teachers to find spaces to lead in community with their colleagues, rather than perhaps fostering a desire to lead in isolation or leave the classroom altogether. I was able to address some implications of these results through my examination of TLDP participants' professional goals and the nature of how their school system went about supporting their teachers' professional growth.

In a three-year case study of a teacher leadership development, Taylor, Goeke, Klein, Onore, & Geist (2011) researched teachers who were enrolled in the Masters of Teacher Leadership program that they had developed for their university, located in the Northeastern United States. This program was designed in collaboration with the local teachers union and was intentionally purposed to *not* resemble a school administration plan of study. Taylor et al. (2011) adopted a focus for this graduate program of inquiry on the part of emerging teacher leaders, citing literature by Odell (1997) to focus attention on “...[their] intended message...that teaching, learning, and leading are

interconnected,” (p. 922). This case study examined questions related to the potential effects on teacher leadership that the graduate program had including how program participation affected the teachers’ beliefs about and understanding of teacher leadership; how the course content and related projects/inquiry affected teachers’ beliefs about their abilities to lead; and the specific ways that teachers enacted leadership as a result of their participation in this program.

Adopting a phenomenological approach to qualitative research, Taylor et al. (2011) utilized participant-observation, in-depth interviews, and a recursive process of document review to collect data as the 13 teacher-participants matriculated through the five-semester graduate program. These researchers’ data analysis and conclusions evidently held two purposes: examining their participant-focused case study questions, *and* evaluating the effectiveness of the program that they had developed in achieving its goals and vision.

Taylor et al. (2011) reported that their concept of how a teacher leadership program should be designed changed throughout the course of their study. Namely, they posited a greater need to allow teachers space to explore their own “organic” topics of study rather than provide a curriculum driven by “a traditional, linear curricular framework,” (p. 927). This was informed by various findings related to their case study questions. For example, Taylor et al. (2011) found that teachers’ views of how they learned shifted from “passive receivers of knowledge to active constructors of knowledge” (p. 923) and they began to characterize more of their informal actions as

teacher leadership. Moreover, Taylor et al. (2011) concluded that teachers believed they had better developed their “voice” as leaders (p. 925) and they better understood the nature of taking their work *public* as they promulgated changes and shared ideas in collaboration with colleagues within/beyond their schools.

These shifts led Taylor et al. (2011) to conclude that participants’ perspectives hold great importance and should be given special attention when evaluating the nature and effectiveness of such a teacher leadership development program. Similarly, I found it beneficial when studying the nature of a school system-sponsored teacher leadership development program to honor and elevate the voices of those who implemented and participated in such a professional development initiative. As I will discuss in Chapter Three, this was approached through a variety of methods that included the use of a survey, conducting one-to-one interviews, and reviewing program documents—part of which contained written reflections by a majority of the 102 participants that had completed TLDP during the first four years of the program’s existence.

### **Job-embedded Leadership Development**

It is important to consider the ways in which college/university-based teacher leadership development has connected with teachers’ experiences in their respective schools. In researching this connection, Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb (1995) examined case studies of professional development schools (PDSs). These PDSs were formal school system-to-university partnerships that were designed to offer pre-service teacher development opportunities, such as student-teaching, mentorships, and

internships. PDSs have provided job-embedded opportunities for teachers to enact leadership skills as mentors and internship/student-teaching supervisors. Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) concluded that the case studies they examined had exemplified the promise PDSs held for promoting teacher leadership, and as such they made three major claims: (1) teacher leadership and teacher learning are closely connected; (2) teacher leadership transcends formal titles and has helped expand the typical roles of teachers; and (3) supporting teacher leadership will build schools' capacities to improve student learning. However, scholars such as Fullan (1995) and Odell (1997) have shared less than enthusiastic views about PDSs, concluding that these partnerships were not feasible for all schools and would therefore create issues with equity and access. Furthermore, they contended that a more effective way to promulgate widespread teacher leadership may be to focus on *pre-service* teacher education curriculum that consistently supports this initiative.

A more recent example of qualitative research that explored how teachers applied leadership skills they had learned through a teacher leadership graduate program was conducted by Hunzicker (2012). In this study, Hunzicker (2012) conducted a mixed-method case study of multiple teachers who had recently completed a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) master's degree cohort in the Midwestern United States. Hunzicker (2012) used hermeneutic phenomenology to "...explore the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings they construct about their experiences," (p. 270). The study included examination of a culminating teacher

leader portfolio that each participant had completed as well as responses to questionnaires and written self-reflections that teachers completed throughout their coursework. Through the journals, teachers were to posit about the ways in which they had learned to lead.

The findings presented by Hunzicker (2012) resembled those of Hatch, White, and Faigenbaum (2005) as teachers in each study self-reported levels of leadership capacity that increased as their content knowledge and expertise increased. Teachers in Hunzicker's (2012) study also completed an *action research* project whereby they studied authentic problems embedded in their respective school settings. Action research has been defined as "...a reflective, systematic inquiry that focuses on a relevant problem in teaching or learning for the purpose of enacting meaningful change to address that problem," (Brighton, 2009, p. 40, as cited in Hunzicker, 2012).

Results of Hunzicker's (2012) study also suggested that in order to enact leadership, teachers must willingly accept new formal and informal roles within their respective schools and school districts. Hunzicker's (2012) conclusions led me to some important questions about the context of North Carolina's mandate that *all teachers* must demonstrate leadership. Specifically, this helped to further frame the relationship between distributed leadership and teacher leadership development on the part of the school district. Therefore, this informed my argument that a case study of a district that has invested time and human/financial resources into a teacher leadership development program could potentially provide helpful data and insights related to my conceptual



framework and research questions. In the next section, I will examine the role of school districts in providing teacher professional development.

### **School District-led Teacher Professional Development**

Studies of district leaders' roles in promoting general teacher professional development (especially content-based professional development, such as mathematics instructional practices) have been readily accessible in the extant literature. For instance, Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, and Polovsky (2005) compared the professional development practices and beliefs of three urban school systems. They concluded that local districts and their superintendents hold central roles in designing and delivering professional development that meets these criteria, such as providing human resource structures that support the implementation of such initiatives. Similarly, Johnson and Chrispeels (2010) conducted mixed-method qualitative research that examined various links between central office and its schools. They found that school personnel reacted positively to a district-led reform in which school-based coaches were made available to all teachers to promulgate their growth with language arts instruction. The initiative had replaced a *train-the-trainer* model of professional development whereby principals formerly hand-picked a select few teachers who were trained as expert keepers of the knowledge for others to follow. This deepened level of school-based support was characterized by one district administrator interviewed in the study who saw the support as providing "...significant impact on teachers' improving their ability to be good instructors," (p. 754).

In research that highlighted high stakes elements of teacher professional development, Hawley and Valli (1999) posited that professional development is a major factor affecting school improvement reform. Opfer and Pedder (2011) highlighted that much of the extant research has concluded that school district professional development activities sustained over a period of time are more effective in promoting teacher learning than single-occurrence workshops and conferences that have been referred to as “...style shows,” (Ball 1994, as cited in Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Exemplifying this conclusion, Peterson, McCarthy, and Elmore (1996) compared case studies of three schools that were restructuring as part of school improvement initiatives and observed a continuum ranging from a *one-size-fits-all* approach to teacher professional development to one that connected teachers to pervasive supports inside/outside the boundaries of the school (as cited in Little, 1999).

It can be argued that professional development designs which have positively affected teachers’ instructional practices may also provide benefit for teacher leadership-themed programs. However, there is limited extant research linking these sorts of explicit practices to a district-sponsored teacher leadership development program (Argent, 2012; Weiner, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Further, while relative consensus exists among researchers about the features of effective teacher professional development (Hawley & Valley, 1999; Opfer & Pedder, 2011), a scholarly debate has also emerged regarding the design and approach to studying such programs (Desimone,

2009; Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2013). Thus, I find it logical to presume that this debate applies to the study of district-sponsored teacher leadership development programs.

On one side of this debate, Desimone (2009) contended that when studying the impact of professional development programs, researchers should focus on a set of core features to ensure that they add to the greater body of knowledge *and* elevate the tenor of professional development studies on the whole. Desimone (2009) posited that these core features include: a focus on the specific content of the program; deciphering whether active versus passive learning has occurred (i.e., observation, feedback and discussion vs. lecture and note-taking); consideration of the coherence with which teacher beliefs, learning objectives, and state/local policies all mesh in support of the program being studied; measure of the duration of the specific program; and the extent to which participation in the program is collective, meaning it is comprised of teachers from the same school, team, point-of-career, and so on. Providing counterpoint to Desimone's (2009) argument that a consensus abounds regarding these core features, Hill, Beisiegel, and Jacob (2013) have recently commented on "...disappointing results from recent rigorous studies of programs containing some or all of these features [that] have turned this consensus on its head," (p. 476). Moreover, they contended that any claim to a consensus in how professional development must be studied is inherently flawed, citing extant research that suggested school districts' poor return-on-investment in professional development (Harris & Sass, 2011; Jacob & Lefgren, 2004) as evidence of this flawed claim.

Hill et al. (2013) also noted that three main factors have caused mainstream research studies of professional development to shift from *small-* to *large-scale* programs. First, greater availability of student achievement data has led researchers to measure wide-scale effects such as the *value-added* effects one program might have. This argument is also similar to the rationale of Standard 6 of the NCPTS. Second, an increased reliance on studying specific features of programs has led researchers to hone in on empirical claims that are correlational as opposed to causal and/or generalizable. This appears reminiscent of Opfer & Pedder's (2011) critique of the nature of studying PLCs. And third, Hill et al. (2013) argued about the limitations of quasi-experimental professional development research, stating that "Because studies evaluated single programs that were combinations of many discrete elements, it was difficult to discern which among those elements—or which interactions among elements—led to program success," (p. 477).

Therefore, Hill et al. (2013) concluded through their synthesis of four decades of research on professional development that a highly effective way to study professional development programs is to do so near their inception and to craft studies that will ultimately lead to the greater body of research on this topic. It can be argued that this seemingly speaks to the importance of using case study research (Stake, 1995) to examine broadly, and provide thick description of, the content and effects of a professional development program. Along these lines, I was guided by this collective argument to design a case study of TLDP that examined historical elements of the

program, including a review of documents and interview questions that harkened district leaders back to when their notion of TLDP was first conceived.

### **Chapter Summary**

Through this review of the literature, I have explored the phenomenon of teacher leadership in education, described ways in which the NCPTS mandate all teachers to demonstrate leadership, and examined extant research that has studied variations of teacher leadership development and the nature of teacher professional development. Together these various themes provided a foundation that explicated a need for further study to address my underlying line of inquiry: *What is the nature of a school district-sponsored teacher leadership development program and what can we learn from a case study of such a program that might inform the practice of other school systems and related organizations who wish to help build leadership capacity among their teachers?*

As highlighted earlier in this proposal, Argent (2012) recently conducted a quantitative, survey-driven study to address a variation of this context. Moreover, research has emerged which has looked closely at the nature of university/college teacher leadership development programs. It is important to note that each of these studies was of a unique case and as Stake (1995) and others have noted (e.g., Glesne, 2011; Lichtman, 2013), the thick description indicative of qualitative research offers many insights into that case but leaves little room for generalizations to other specific settings, actors, and circumstances. It is for these reasons that I adopted a qualitative

case study of a school district-sponsored teacher leadership development program as a pathway to examine my four research questions. I will now turn to Chapter Three and a more elaborate discussion of how my study was designed and conducted.

### CHAPTER III

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Considering the interrelatedness of the research approach one chooses, the topics and questions to be studied, and the selection of who will be studied, Lichtman (2013) has concluded that a researcher can begin planning his/her studies “...in any of the three places...moving in any order,” (p. 70). I decided to examine a school district-sponsored teacher leadership development program based on my sincere interest in learning about the experiences of teachers who participated in this type of professional development program and those district stakeholders who instituted such a program to help their teachers develop capacities as leaders.

In designing this study, I was inclined to adopt methodology that focused largely on the perceptions and experiences of participants in my study, hence giving them *voice*. It was primarily for this reason that my adopted case study methodology was guided by a constructivist lens for research (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Metaphorically and theoretically speaking, the constructivist lens positions researchers as facilitators of learning (i.e., for both the researcher and their participants) rather than as detectives who pursue the hard evidence sought after through a positivist lens of inquiry (Glesne, 2011). What adopting this paradigm therefore indicated is that I was inclined to conduct research through a lens in which I pursued meaning and

interpretations that were co-constructed with participants in my study, rather than seek discovery of some nexus of absolute truths (Stake, 1995). Within the following sections of this chapter, I will discuss the foundations of qualitative case study research, the manner in which this study was designed, and the positionality and subjectivity that I brought to this study as a researcher.

### **Foundations of Qualitative and Case Study Research**

As I discussed in Chapter Two, a compelling argument has been made in the literature for utilizing case study methods to examine the nature of teacher professional development (Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2013). In debunking several “myths” about the value and credibility of case study, Flyvbjerg (2006) argued that “The advantage of the case study is that it can ‘close in’ on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice,” (p. 219). In explicating the foundations and structure of case study research, Stake (1995) has stated:

In qualitative case study, we seek greater understanding of the case. We want to appreciate the uniqueness and complexity of the case, its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts....I choose to use *issues* as conceptual structure—and issue questions as my primary research questions—in order to force attention to complexity and contextuality. I also use them because identification of issues draws attention to problems and concerns (p. 16).

Case studies can be found across many disciplines such as business education, psychology, and even product design (Lichtman, 2013). This approach is rooted heavily in sociology and involves the selection of a specific person, program, or entity that may



provide valuable insights and opportunities for interpretation around a problem or issue of interest. Furthermore, while critics may criticize qualitative research as subjective and therefore lacking rigor, generalizability, or trustworthiness, subjectivity is precisely what allows qualitative researchers to develop deep understandings of the case(s) they may study as well as produce thick descriptions of data and analyses that communicate their findings (Stake, 1995). Stake (1995) has spelled out the importance of interpretation—also referred to as *assertions*—in conducting qualitative case studies, stating that “For assertions, we draw from understandings deep within us, understandings whose derivation may be some hidden mix of personal experience, scholarship, [and] assertions of other researchers,” (p. 12).

When conducting case studies, the cases that are selected may be *typical*, *exemplary*, or *unusual/unique* manifestations of the problem or issue being researched (Lichtman, 2013). I find it reasonable to conclude that while the mandate that all teachers must demonstrate leadership made this issue typical across North Carolina, a formal school district-sponsored teacher leadership development program seemingly had qualities that made it a unique and exemplary setting within which to base my case study research.

Examples of case studies in the extant literature that have explored teacher leadership have included a comparison of the complementary roles of district and teacher leaders in supporting instructional improvements across four diverse school districts (Firestone & Martinez, 2007), a comparative case study of three teachers who

made conscious decisions to lead from their classrooms and often contest the status quo (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000), and a study that compared the views and beliefs of members of highly collaborative teacher teams at two different schools in exploring the nature of conflict and collaboration as related to the role of Professional Learning Communities in promoting student academic achievement on standardized tests (Achinstein, 2002).

### **Design of this Case Study**

In this section, I will discuss the steps that were used for participant selection and recruitment, the methods used for collecting data, and a summary of how this data was analyzed in order to address my four guiding questions for research, which are listed below:

1. What is the nature of a teacher leadership development program sponsored by a public school district in North Carolina and how do district-level leaders perceive that such a program relates to their role in distributing leadership among teachers in their school system?
2. How have teachers' views of what teacher leadership is (e.g., What does it mean? How is it enacted?) perhaps changed and/or developed as related to participating in their school district's teacher leadership development program?
3. What is the nature of how teachers learn about leadership as related to their participation in a district-sponsored teacher leadership development program?

4. What can we learn from the experiences of teachers who have participated in a district-sponsored teacher leadership development program that might inform the practice of other school systems and related organizations?

### **Participant Selection and Recruitment**

As pointed out by Lunenburg and Irby (2008), it is important for researchers to define the participants they wish to include in their study and to describe the criteria by which they are to be included. Moreover, they have noted that in the realm of qualitative dissertation studies, *purposive sampling* is often used to ensure that a smaller number of people are invited to participate in order to achieve a sufficient depth and complexity of information in pursuit of the research questions. For my study, I focused on *criterion sampling* as a means for including a sufficient number of participants in my data collection design.

In utilizing criterion sampling, I selected participants who met one of two main criteria:

1. District-level administrators (e.g., superintendent, assistant superintendent, curriculum director) who have been key stakeholders in developing TLDP.
2. Teachers who were about to participate in TLDP and who were willing to participate in a survey during the summer before the school year in which their cohort completed the program. From this sample came the teachers who were willing to then participate in one-to-one interviews during the summer before and after they participated in TLDP.

Considering these criteria, I knew from my familiarity with the school district where I completed this research that very little demographic stratification of

participants would be possible for criterion #1. The participant pool in this instance was limited to whoever was serving in one of just a few key district leadership positions. This included the district's superintendent, one of its assistant superintendents, and two district-level curriculum directors. It also bears mentioning that each of these district-level leaders were Caucasian women who had been working in the field of education for approximately 20 to 30 years.

Table 1. Summary of District-Level Leader Participants

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Yrs. Exp.</b>
Dr. Susan Arnold	Superintendent	25-30 yrs
Beverly Walter	Assistant Superintendent	25-30 yrs
Rachel Myers	Curriculum Director	15-20 yrs
Elizabeth Mitchell	Curriculum Director	15-20 yrs

When considering criterion #2, this study was designed so that any member of the 2013-2014 TLDP cohort, which was about to begin during the month I began data collection, could be included as a participant. Through the process of gaining consent with the district to conduct this study of TLDP, I knew that the 2013-2014 cohort represented 25 teachers who had been chosen from each of their schools across the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Furthermore, participants in this cohort represented regular education/classroom teachers as well as other more specialized roles such as special education teachers, media/library specialists, school-based technology facilitators, and English-as-Second Language (ESL) teachers.

Once these criteria were established for the study, I worked with the district's superintendent to secure permission to conduct my research and gain access to participants in their 2013-2014 TLDP cohort. Through my working relationship with the superintendent, I made arrangements to distribute a brief survey to each member of the cohort in order to commence my recruitment and data-collection processes. The survey allowed me to collect demographic and qualitative data as well as gauge which teachers might also be willing to participate in one-to-one interviews with me as part of this study. As presented in Appendix F, the survey I conducted asked participants to share some basic demographic information about their role and experience level in education, why they had chosen to participate in TLDP, and provided some open-ended response questions about participants' goals and expectations for TLDP and their views on teacher leadership. This survey doubled as a crucial point of recruitment and began a direct line of communication with those participants who were willing to conduct one-to-one interviews with me about their experiences during the TLDP program.

While it could be said that anyone willing to participate was included within this research design, my choice to engage in a case study of such a *specific* district-led program made further exclusion of participants rather unnecessary. Ultimately, 16 out of the 25 members of the 2013-2014 TLDP cohort responded to my initial survey. Of those individuals, each of the two male participants and 14 out of the 23 of the female participants responded. From that group of 16, nine teachers were willing to participate in one-to-one interviews. From those nine, I selected seven participants, eliminating

two based on the fact that I had previously served as their assistant principal and direct evaluator—a decision meant to limit the ethical dilemma that this might otherwise have caused for my study. The seven remaining teachers were then included in a *two-round* sequence of one-to-one interviews: once during their first month of participation in TLDP and then again after the school year was complete following their participation in the program.

Table 2. Summary of Teacher Leader Participants

Pseudonym	Grade-level	Role	Yrs. Exp.	Interview (Y/N)
Vivian Johnson	Elementary School	Core subjects	10-15 yrs	N
Tammy Darling	Elementary School	Core subjects	16+ yrs	N
Lilly Harvey	Elementary School	Core subjects	7-10 yrs	N
Kellie Wilson	Elementary School	Core subjects	1-3 yrs	N
Amy Dykstra	High School	Core subjects	4-6 yrs	N
Wally Miller	High School	Core subjects	10-15 yrs	N
Isabelle Alfonso	Middle School	Core subjects	16+ yrs	N
Katelyn Seaver	Middle School	EC/ESL Specialist	1-3 yrs	N*
Denise McReynolds	Middle School	Media/Tech/Support	7-10 yrs	N*
Debra Cone	Elementary School	Core subjects	7-10 yrs	Y
Melissa Brooks	Elementary School	Curriculum Support	7-10 yrs	Y
Linda Leiter	High School	Elective class	7-10 yrs	Y
Hannah Piazza	Middle School	EC/ESL/Specialist	4-6 yrs	Y
Brenda Carter	Middle School	EC/ESL/Specialist	16+ yrs	Y
Thomas Wright	Middle School	Media/Tech/Support	16+ yrs	Y
Nancy Jones	Middle School	Media/Tech/Support	16+ yrs	Y

N\* – Indicates the teachers who were willing to be interviewed but who were excluded.

## Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods that I used to carry out the design of this research study included *survey*, *interview*, and *document review*. Some qualitative-oriented scholars

have debated the role of the word *collection* in qualitative research. For example, Glesne (2011, p. 47) noted that Dicks, Mason, Coffey, and Atkinson (2005) have preferred the term *data recording*, seeing it as erroneous to characterize data as “...simply inert materials lying around in the field, waiting for the researcher to come along and ‘collect’ them,” (p. 115). Furthermore, qualitative researchers often employ a combination of methods in order to achieve *triangulation*—an approach which some researchers view as a means for widening the array of data that may be interpreted and increasing the trustworthiness and usefulness of their findings (Lichtman, 2013).

When approaching the varied methods of case study research, it is also important for researchers to address precisely what they seek to learn and consider the ways in which this sort of knowledge may best be discovered. Explicating the importance of such preparation, Stake (1995) has found that “Most researchers find they do their best work by being thoroughly prepared to concentrate on a few things, yet ready for unanticipated happenings that reveal the nature of the case,” (p. 55). Moreover, Stake has noted that it is of critical importance to plan ways of organizing and classifying collected data throughout this process in order to remain focused on the topics and questions that are to be interrogated through a study of the case. *Table 3* presents a basic outline of the twelve steps I followed in collecting data for this dissertation study. This table is followed by discussions of my specific methods for collecting data.

Table 3. Outline of Data Collection Phases

Timeframe	Research Step	Brief Description
May – June 2013	Gained access to study of TLDP	Initial conversations about program with district leadership; Gained written approval from superintendent
June 2013	Compiled initial participant pool	District supplied name and emails of all of 2013-2014 cohort participants
July 2013	Received IRB approval to begin study.	Submitted IRB application; interview and survey protocols, district approval, and recruitment scripts all in place
July 2013	Distributed initial survey	Sent out recruitment email with link to initial survey to entire 2013-2014 cohort
July - Aug. 2013	Administered /tracked initial survey	Collected survey responses; survey linked to recruitment script for one-to-one interviews
Aug. 2013	Conducted initial interviews with TLDP cohort participants	Set up and conducted interviews of TLDP participants prior to beginning of school year
June - July 2014	Conducted district interviews	Contacted and conducted interviews with district-level stakeholders: superintendent, assistant superintendent, curriculum directors
July - Aug. 2014	Conducted 2nd interviews with TLDP cohort participants	Conducted follow-up interviews with cohort participants to collect post-program data
June - July 2014	Gathered documents for review	Gathered session materials; archived participants' reflections submitted to their superintendent; artifacts from group projects
Nov. - Dec. 2014	Member checking/data review	Participants provided draft pages/analytic memos; chance to provide additional input

**Survey.** While certainly a technique that is common in the positivist tradition, qualitative researchers sometimes utilize surveys to augment their data collection, prompting some studies in this respect to be characterized as *mixed methods* (Lichtman, 2013). One reason for their use is that surveys can facilitate the recruitment of potential participants to be interviewed. Moreover, surveys may support triangulation of data by helping to collect demographic information and answers to consistent sets of key questions from a wider range of participants. Researchers often use electronic



online survey tools to collect data and organize/analyze results. For the purpose of my study, I utilized the *Qualtrics* online software tool to deliver surveys to the entire 4<sup>th</sup> cohort of TLDP participants in the summer before the school year in which they completed the program.

Overall, the survey I administered was intended to: (1) record basic demographic information about the TLDP participants' role and level of school in which they currently served, how many years' experience they had as a teacher, and multiple-choice responses to why they chose to participate in TLDP; (2) record information from each participant in response to open-ended questions about why they wanted to participate in the program, what their professional goals were and how they thought TLDP might help them achieve those goals, and how they believed they would meet the intended objectives of TLDP; and (3) recruit participants who were willing to act as *key informants* (Bradley-Levine, 2011) and engage in one-to-one interviews with me prior to the school year during which they were to complete the TLDP program. Since my ultimate objective was recruitment of key informants who I could follow up with after the program, my initial survey questions were designed to be *general* and *non-threatening* in nature. They were also developed in consultation with my dissertation advisor.

Those participants who were willing to conduct follow-up interviews supplied me with either their email or phone number and from that I was able to continue with the recruitment process. Through this survey method, I also maintained the confidentiality of each participant by storing survey responses in one of my two password-protected

devices that I used for data management as well as by de-identifying their responses through the use of pseudonyms and including only general descriptions of their teaching assignments throughout this manuscript.

**Interview.** The purpose of interview as a data collection method is to learn more about people's ideas and perspectives on a given topic and perhaps the manner in which they share meaning about such topics with others included in the study. As Stake (1995) has noted, "Much of what we cannot observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others," (p. 64). Depending on the goals of the study, researchers may choose to develop highly structured or more open-ended interview protocols (i.e., sets of questions).

In discussing effective approaches to conducting interviews, Merriam (1988) has summarized the various types of information that can be elicited from participants. For example, researchers might choose questions that (1) are contextual in nature, (2) seek responses to hypothetical situations, (3) challenge participants to consider an opposing view, (4) prompt participants to describe an ideal situation, and/or (5) ask participants to interpret and react to some of what they have been saying during the interview. Merriam (1988) has also cautioned researchers that asking questions with multiple parts/objectives may impact clarity for the participant and asking participants to recall specific facts may confound or frustrate the participant and cause negative feelings as a result.

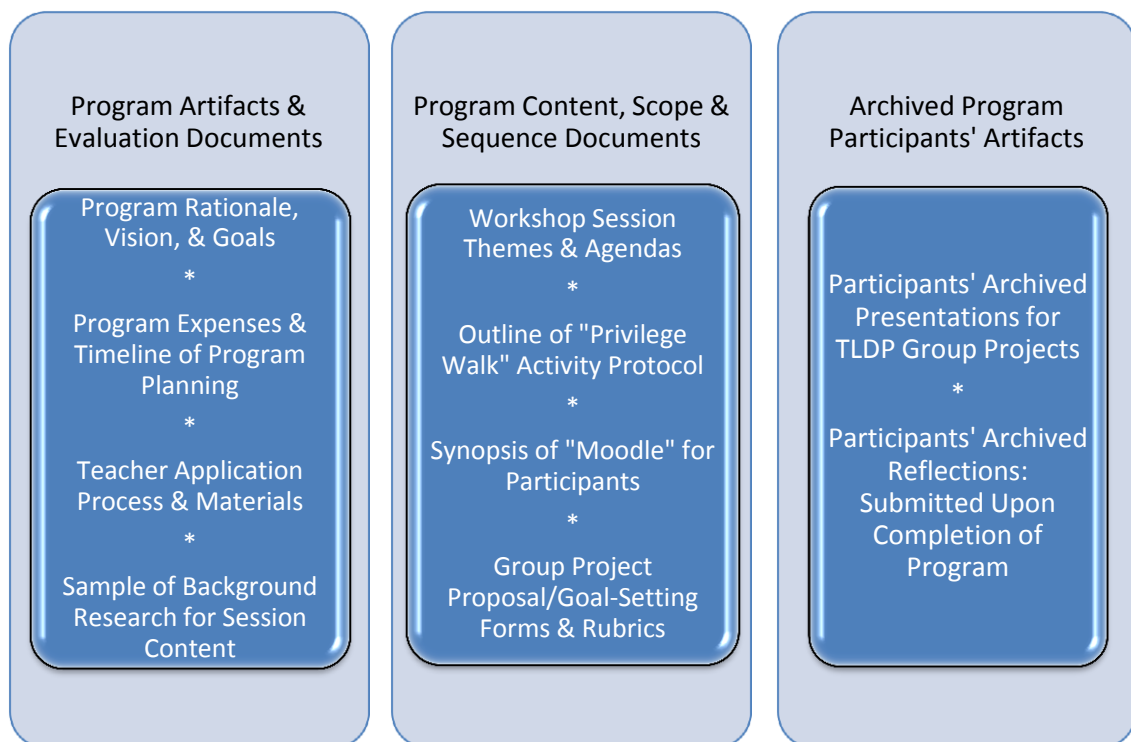
For the purpose of this research study, I utilized semi-structured protocols in order to conduct one-to-one interviews with TLDP participants and district-level stakeholders. The interviews I conducted were held at mutually agreed upon times and places, were recorded with the use of an electronic device (my password-protected smartphone), and were then all transcribed verbatim to aid in my data analysis. My initial interviews with seven teachers about to complete TLDP lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. My follow-up interviews with those seven teachers upon completion of the 2013-2014 TLDP cohort and with four district leaders each lasted for approximately 60-70 minutes. I have included the respective protocols for these three sets of interviews I completed in Appendices C, D, and E. Moreover, beyond using pseudonyms in this manuscript, I further maintained the confidentiality of each participant by making no mention to participants of what others had been sharing with me throughout this process.

**Document review.** Qualitative research can entail a review of documents that are important to the case. This might include portfolios produced by participants (Hunzicker, 2012), course listings and descriptions of an educational program (Leonard, Petta, & Porter, 2012), or archival materials and historical documents (Glesne, 2011) that provide further contexts for issues important to the case. In terms of data collection, Stake (1995) has found it important to flesh out research questions, relevant issues, and topics for inquiry *before* amassing documents for a given case study. In this manner, researchers can decipher which documents are of most importance and

conceptualize how such documents might be analyzed. For example, Stake (1995) suggested that reviewing a school improvement plan is a broad undertaking. However, reviewing that document to determine how often “achievement gap” is mentioned proves a more efficient use of time (p. 68). For this case study, I used document review to specifically examine the nature of a district-led teacher leadership development program and how such a program might have helped teachers to develop as leaders.

Through my informal negotiation process with district leaders, I was able to collect several forms of data. A visual summary of the types of documents that I reviewed is included below in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Visual Summary of Document Review Data Collected



The most extensive element of my document review methodology was to read and analyze the archived set of written reflections that TLDP participants had submitted to their superintendent and principal in the summer following their completion of the program. These reflections, which were two to four pages in length, were submitted to the superintendent and principals by 79 of the 102 participants who completed TLDP over its four-year history. Each submission was written in response to an identical set of prompts that asked participants to reflect on two out of four possible themes that were present in TLDP as well as to provide a statement of their professional goals and ways in which the district could support these goals. I was first granted access to this archived collection of reflections during my interview with Superintendent Dr. Arnold as we discussed various data which I might review for this case study.

Once it became clear that I would be given access to an archived set of reflections previously written by individuals who had *not* provided informed consent to participate in my dissertation study, it became imperative for me to define precisely how I would analyze and present such data. Hence, I requested in my IRB application to treat this only as *document review data* and not in any way that would identify specific individuals or highlight in-depth quotes from their reflections. Nonetheless, as I had discussed with my advisor through the analysis and writing stages of this dissertation, including this data has provided more background of the professional development program upon which I have focused through this case study. This data also supported a methodological focus on triangulation by thickening my overall description of the nature

of how participants have reacted to TLDP and/or perceived their professional development as a result of their participation in the program—at least to the extent in which they chose to describe it for their superintendent and principal. Although 16 of the 79 individuals who wrote these reflections *had* provided informed consent to participate in one-to-one interviews and/or complete a survey as part of my case study, I analyzed this data set as entirely separate from the survey and interview data I had also collected, from which my findings will be presented in Chapter Five.

The following section will provide some foundational information about the nature of data analysis in qualitative research as well as more specific explanations about the steps that I took while completing this research.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

There are several important practices that contribute to trustworthiness and ethical practices in qualitative methodologies. For example, these include emergent and deductive forms of coding data (Glesne, 2011) and comparative approaches between various cases that are studied, such as the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser, 1965). Especially since a primary methodological objective of my study was to co-construct knowledge along with the various participants, I utilized the methods of *thematic coding/analysis of data*, *triangulation*, and *member checking* in order to construct the “thick description” necessary for completing this qualitative case study (Stake, 1995). I will now briefly describe each of these methods that I used.

## Thematic Coding/Analysis

A staple in the analysis of qualitative data are the methods of coding and interpretation (Glesne, 2011). In these methods, the researcher starts with large amounts of raw data (e.g., interview recordings/transcripts, observation field notes, or artifacts) and engages in an ongoing process of classifying, sorting, and interpreting key points of information. Lichtman (2013, p. 248) has described this as “sorting and sifting” in order to reduce what may initially be 80-100 codes that represent data down to a more manageable 15-20 codes that can help organize the themes and narratives which are eventually reported through the manuscript. Within qualitative studies, coding and interpretation of narrative forms of data (e.g., interview transcripts) help researchers identify direct quotes that are germane to the topics and issues of importance. Inclusion of direct quotes in research findings contribute to the densely written reports that are indicative of the qualitative tradition (Lichtman, 2013).

In order to focus reporting and ensure that data that are included contribute significantly to the issues of a case study, researchers utilize one of several types of reasoning and reduction techniques to develop *themes of analyses*. Often, these themes are developed as emergent or inductive forms of interpretations. For the purpose of this research study, I analyzed the various pieces of qualitative data as Lichtman (2013, p. 252) suggests: from raw data, to codes, to categories, to thematic concepts. As I will present throughout the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, the

themes that emerged have each related to the nature of a teacher leadership development program and the experiences of such a program's participants.

Considering the specific types of data I collected for this case study, it also bears mentioning that there were methodological differences between the data analysis methods I used for interview and survey data and those which I used for TLDP's archived, end-of-year reflections. I will now provide summaries of each approach.

**Interview and survey data.** When it came to the interviews and survey I had conducted, I was ethically able to include direct quotes from these data sets. To engage in thematic coding of these specific data, I began with several readings of the survey responses and complete transcripts that were written for each interview. Each time I read, I made notes in the margins and highlighted elements of the transcripts and responses that were most relevant to my research questions. Concurrent to this, I made quasi-charts (handwritten at first) that summarized the various themes I observed within the data (e.g., how participants defined teacher leadership, district leaders' perceptions of how they distributed leadership, etc.). I then reviewed these notes, went back and listened to the audio recordings of interviews for key moments where I wanted to double-check for clarity and/or meaning, and then began the process of reducing the broad codes and notes into an outlined set of themes that I have presented in the subsequent chapters of this study.

**Archived reflection data.** A particularly important piece of data in this case study ended up being a set of 79 TLDP participants' end-of-program reflections that the



district had archived over a four-year period. When I analyzed this data set, I began by reading each of the reflections multiple times and writing condensed summaries of participants' responses into a matrix that I organized in columns representing the possible questions to which they could have responded. TLDP participants' response-rates were unequally distributed across the question-set due to the nature of how they were asked to state their professional goals and then respond to *two of four* additional prompts. I then used my matrix of responses to thematically code participants' responses to the specific prompts. Once this initial thematic coding was complete, I cross-referenced the themes and counted the frequency with which each theme occurred across these four years' worth of reflections. These findings are discussed in Chapter Five and the specific frequencies with which each of these themes occurred are presented in a set of data tables in Appendix G.

My presentation of findings in Chapter Five based on the archived TLDP reflections also reflects some of the overlapping in teachers' responses across more than one theme, even within the same prompt. For example, one teacher may have indicated that s/he would like to pursue National Board Certification as well as a career in administration. Likewise, another teacher may have reflected on two or more ways in which s/he perceived they had grown professionally as a result of their participation in TLDP. In terms of the limitations of this data presentation, I intentionally stopped short of including specific quotes—even though this would have been quite interesting to

share—in order to maintain compliance with the specific terms of my IRB approval for including this data set.

### **Triangulation**

Whereas the positivist tradition of research is most concerned with validity and reliability, qualitative researchers must contend with methods that ensure their studies are considered trustworthy. The qualitative method of *triangulation* helped provide another element of trustworthiness to this research study. In particular, rather than treating interview, survey, and document review data sets as if they each existed in isolation, I used triangulation analysis to examine these various data through a comparative lens. This proved particularly important when constructing my overall conclusions and recommendations for this case study. For example, triangulation was important as a means for relating each component of data I collected back to the conceptual framework I adopted for this study. This allowed me to more fully examine capacity-building as the intersection of distributed leadership and a constructivist view of teacher professional development. Moreover, triangulation aided my ability to construct more of a thick description when presenting an overview of TLDP in Chapter Four, which then set a more elaborate context upon which to present subsequent pieces of qualitative data.

### **Member Checking**

In commenting on methods that bolster the rigor and trustworthiness of case study research, Stake (1995) also stated the importance of a process referred to as

*member checking*. With this approach, researchers intentionally give rough drafts of their writing to the various participants in their study about whom such writing is based. These pages may be in the forms of analytic memos or journal entries. Participants are then asked to read and review such text, checking for accuracy and their level of comfort with what has been written.

The member checking method frames an important way in which ethics and trustworthiness intersect in the discipline of qualitative research. Moreover, this method provides yet another opportunity for data analysis, as participants' reactions to analytic summaries of their responses can serve as an important piece of information. These responses can manifest as *spontaneous and unsolicited* insights that participants may share with the researcher outside the framework of formal interviews and can then be included in the overall data set (Hunzicker, 2010). Therefore, part of my methodology was to email participants analytic summaries of our interviews.

While in no case did representations of participants' data change as a result of member-checking, there was one instance whereby a district leader later clarified what she meant when we discussed her view of teacher leadership. While I presented the original quote verbatim from our interview, I did incorporate her feedback in the form of a clarifying sentence that preceded the particular quote in question. Three teachers also responded by email to these analytic summaries. These three teachers only communicated their satisfaction with how I captured our interviews and two of them expressed their interest in reading this manuscript once it had been completed.

### **Positionality and Subjectivity**

An important aspect of conducting trustworthy, rigorous research is for those conducting studies to contend with the constructs of researcher positionality and subjectivity. In basic terms, these constructs refer to a transparent awareness of how a researcher's background, perspectives, and research interests affect the interactions they have with the participants/subjects of their study (Lichtman, 2013). As Glesne (2011) has pointed out, an awareness of positionality "...is being attuned to intersubjectivity, how the subjectivities of all involved guide the research process, content, and ideally, the interpretations," (p. 158).

Moreover, researchers possess little control over the multitude of factors which coalesce to form their subjectivity and hence can bolster the trustworthiness of their study by readily acknowledging such factors and communicating them throughout the processes of their research. As a researcher, it would have been impossible for me to diverge from the various roles I serve in life and the experiences which have helped form who I am as an educator/researcher. Therefore, an important component of my pursuit of trustworthy and rigorous research findings has been to sustain a keen awareness of the positionality I brought to this project, as well as maintain transparency with the various stakeholders who had a role in supporting this work (i.e., my dissertation chairperson/committee members, my research participants, and my family) about my goals, perceptions, and biases.

I brought to this research process a deep appreciation for the work of classroom teachers, especially those who stand out and lead to ensure that their students succeed and that their schools improve. A major facet of my formative life experiences included being the son of a veteran New York City School teacher. My mother was always one who was well prepared for the daily rigors of her job, who jumped at the opportunity to “talk shop” with other educators, and who was not afraid to stand up for what was right (or wrong) in public education. As my life continued, my wife and I began our own careers as public school teachers in North Carolina during the very same year. I am proud to say that she, too, has embodied a great sense of urgency, professionalism, and commitment for the mission of educating children. Moreover, throughout the twelve years of my serving as a special education teacher and school administrator, I have noticed what is often times a stark contrast between teachers who are clearly passionate about and focused upon their roles as educators, and others who perhaps are not leading their practice with “integrity” (Palmer, 1998, p. 10) and/or children’s best interests in mind.

Considering more specifically the positionality I brought to this study and how this has impacted intersubjectivity within my research, it is important to note that at the time that this study commenced, I had just served during the two previous years as an assistant principal within the district that sponsored TLDP. Based in large part on my focus on the challenges of all teachers demonstrating leadership, I became quite fascinated with the manner in which this school system administered a workshop series

geared specifically toward developing teachers as leaders. By the time I actually began this research project, I had just taken an elementary school principal position with another school system. This meant that the political dilemma of conducting “backyard research” (Glesne, 2011, p. 41) was no longer of concern for the duration of this study.

While interacting with the various participants in this study, I transparently communicated to them that the goals of my study were to learn more about the role of a school system in developing its teachers as leaders, as well as to learn about the experiences of the teachers, themselves. Throughout this process, participants appeared quite comfortable sharing their earnest opinions and recollections with me. A few times during interviews, I did need to *dig deeper* on some responses, often by simply reminding participants that their identities would remain anonymous throughout this research process. It also appeared at times that due to the nature of the administrator’s position I currently held within a neighboring school, teachers were sometimes more hesitant when sharing a critique of their experiences in the program and district leaders more hesitant in sharing something that may have been critical about their program’s participants. However, I found that throughout this process, data presented in this dissertation were co-created with participants who appeared eager to share their stories and who were for the most part proud of their experiences as related to TLDP.

## Chapter Summary

A variety of extant literature has pointed to the usefulness of adopting case study as a viable means for researching teacher professional development. While the generalizability of any one case study is typically limited only to that particular case, this methodology does present researchers with a rich platform for investigating issues and presenting a thick description of their findings. In order to investigate the nature of how school districts in North Carolina are developing their teachers as leaders, as well as what teachers may learn from this type of professional development experience, I chose to conduct a case study of one school system's *Teacher Leadership Development Program (TLDP)*. In this chapter, I have presented an overview of the methodology that I used in order to conduct this case study, including participant selection, data collection methods, and the manner in which the data was analyzed. I have also described for the reader the positionality that I brought to this study as a researcher/practitioner in the field of educational leadership.

I will now turn to Chapter Four, the first of two chapters within which I will present data that I collected and analyzed for this case study. Chapter Four will focus on the lens of *distributed leadership* and will include an in-depth look at the nature of TLDP. Using the conceptual framework from Chapter One, this chapter will thematically present qualitative data that I collected through interviews with four district-level leaders, as well as through an analysis of the programmatic documents that I reviewed.

CHAPTER IV

THE DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP LENS:

PRESENTATION OF DISTRICT-FOCUSED DATA

In this chapter, I will present findings from what I have characterized as *district-focused data*. Chapter Four is divided into two broad sections that (1) describe the nature of TLDP from the district-level leaders' perspectives and (2) present additional interview data that delves further into several themes from my interviews with these district leaders. These themes will include district leaders' perceptions about teacher leadership and distributed leadership, their views on TLDP's stated goals and objectives, and perceived successes and critiques of TLDP that district leaders shared during our interviews. Moreover, I have provided a brief description of the school district that sponsored TLDP and therefore served as the setting for my case study.

**Presentation of the Teacher Leadership Development Program (TLDP)**

In this section, I will examine the nature of how one school district approached the need to develop their teachers as leaders through the design and implementation of a formal professional development program. This program will be referred to as "TLDP," which is a pseudonym for the program's actual name used in order to maintain the confidentiality of participants and the school system. The findings in this section are



based on my interviews with four district-level leaders (superintendent, assistant superintendent, and two curriculum directors) and an analytical review of various documents related to TLDP. I will first present a descriptive overview of the school district that sponsored TLDP, focused upon the four-year period leading up to when I completed data collection for this case study.

### **Setting of the Program: District Overview**

The district that sponsored TLDP was a smaller system located in the Piedmont region of North Carolina that served students in Pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade across their elementary, middle, and high school settings. This school system's student population was racially diverse and had been growing larger over the history of TLDP.

Overall, approximately 4,500 students were enrolled in the district when they first began planning TLDP in 2009-2010 and this number climbed to approximately 4,700 (i.e., 4.4% increase) over the next four school years. Among this student population (as of 2013-2014), 40.6 % were identified as *Hispanic*, 39.3% as *White*, 14.5% as *Black*, 1.5% as *Asian*, 0.3% as *Native American/Indian*, and 3.7% as *Multiracial*. It was also evident that their student population had become more racially diverse and economically disadvantaged during the four years leading up to this case study. For example, the number of students who were identified as Hispanic had risen from approximately 1,500 (or 33%) to 1,900 (or 40.6%), the number of students identified as White had declined from approximately 2,030 (or 44.5%) to approximately 1,875 (or 39.3%), and the number of students identified as Black had held relatively steady (i.e., 14.9% to 14.5%).

Furthermore, while 61.5% of the district's students were identified as economically disadvantaged in 2009-2010, this ratio increased to 73.5% over the next four years.

While the racial/ethnic identification of the district's students was diverse, the race/ethnicity of their teachers—and hence, *TLDP participants*—was not. The demographics of TLDP participants distributed as follows:

- 89% women
- 11% men
- 91% White (women and men)
- 5% Black (all were women)
- 4% Hispanic or Latina (all were women)

Looking at student achievement and graduation rates, this district demonstrated overall progress in terms of meeting/exceeding statewide expectations and trends during the first four years of TLDP. For instance, the graduation rate at the district's lone high school had risen steadily during these four years (76.1%, 83.7%, 85.1%, and 86.3%, respectively, from 2011 to 2014). These graduation rates were higher than the state average for North Carolina in each of those four years by a mean average of 4.1 percentage points per year. Moreover, between five and seven of the district's eight schools met or exceeded North Carolina's expectations for student growth on statewide assessments during this period. Similarly, the most currently available data at the time of this study indicated that schools in this district had met *162 out of 198* (81.8%) of the possible targets that were used to measure *Annual Yearly Progress* (AYP) based on the district's student-demographics (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

## **Examining the Nature of TLDP**

I will now present a thick description of the nature of the district's Teacher Leadership Development Program (TLDP). This description is divided into several sections, which include the background and rationale of TLDP, the scope and sequence of TLDP, and the project-based requirements of TLDP.

**Background and rationale of TLDP.** The background and rationale of TLDP has been organized around several themes that emerged from my data analysis, which include: a brief history of how and why the program was first implemented; how the program's dynamics were developed; how the district approached the recruitment and application process; district leaders' perceptions of TLDP's mutual benefits; and a summary of the program's annual expenses.

***Conception of the program.*** According to the district's superintendent, Dr. Susan Arnold, when the new North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS) were first implemented across the state, she and one of her assistant superintendents were meeting with an advisory group that was convened monthly to foster direct dialogue between teachers from each school and district leadership. As district leaders at this meeting were explaining the NCPTS and soliciting advice on how they might roll out this new teacher evaluation process, one middle school teacher asked the district leaders, "How am I going to demonstrate leadership if I'm not on the School Leadership Team?" According to Superintendent Dr. Arnold, this very question became the "...linchpin moment..." when she and her assistant superintendent later returned to

their office suite, looked at each other and said, “We need to work on that!” Soon after, a team of district- and school-level leaders was formed to address this concern. As one of the curriculum directors, Rachel Myers, remembers, “...anybody who had a background in curriculum, basically who had taught, were at the table.” Superintendent Dr. Arnold stated how at that time:

[Our team] worked together in the winter and the spring of 2010 and we did a lot of reading on teacher leadership. [We] tried to think what a teacher leadership curriculum would look like: what is it that we wanted them to know; how we would build their leadership capacity. And so out of that came the vision for the academy, the goals for the academy, a curriculum for the academy—or at least conceptually what each session would be about—and the idea of what the project would be like. And so we built it from there.

According to several program documents, the explicit goals of TLDP were stated as:

1. Build leadership skills and capacity among all teachers.
2. Improve the professional practice of teachers.
3. Build a culture of shared accountability and responsibility for the success of the school and the district.
4. Demonstrate ethical principles and uphold the Code of Ethics for NC educators.

Moreover, the program vision for TLDP was stated on the district’s internal program evaluation document as *“The TLDP will be a collaborative framework for professional learning activities to improve teacher practices and student learning.”*

***Building an army of leaders.*** Commenting on an “...overarching purpose...” that had been an underlying motivation for her district to develop TLDP, Superintendent Dr.

Arnold also described elements of her vision that had perhaps been less explicitly communicated in the program's formal vision statement:

Things are changing so much in education. Standards are changing. Technology integration is being layered on. PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) is being layered on. Common Core, new assessment practices, all of that... And so a lot of this was that we can't do that work as a district unless we have an army of people out there who can help lead these things. We cannot do it alone! And so it was really building our capacity for reform, for change, and sustaining those changes, those positive changes on behalf of our students. That is the underlying, bottom-line: that we need more people who can transform our practices to help meet students' needs.

According to one of the district's assistant superintendents, Beverly Walter, another important aspect of TLDP was showcasing for their program participants that becoming a teacher leader "...ought not mean that they become a glorified assistant principal, but it means you have leadership responsibilities...[and that] there are many faces of teacher leadership." Instead, district leaders conveyed that TLDP was about demonstrating what one of their curriculum directors, Elizabeth Mitchell, characterized as driving the rationale for this program. Here she stated:

There are a thousand different ways to lead in your school without being on the teacher leadership team. So that's why there was this need to help teachers see how to develop as a leader, how to lead in your classrooms, how to lead in your PLC's, how to lead in the committees that you're on, and how to lead in your profession, how to lead as a teacher.... Because there's this mindset that unless you're picked to be a department chair or picked to be a leadership team member, that you're not *really* a leader.

This theme of TLDP being about building an extensive array of teacher leaders at each school and not developing some elite core of teachers for the district, nor some group of future school administrators, was shared by all four district leaders. Indicative of this view, Curriculum Director Elizabeth stated, “The TLDP is not about preparing administrators. It is not a place to groom people to yank them out of the classroom.”

***Developing the program’s dynamics.*** Ultimately, district stakeholders designed TLDP as a series of eight all-day workshops. These sessions were implemented based on a scope and sequence that encompassed self-reflection, communication and collaboration skills, assessing school culture and conflict, understanding and implementing change, and implementation of an action research-style project (explained in more depth later in this chapter). These sessions were attended by teachers selected from each school in the district and were led by cabinet-level district leaders (i.e., superintendent, assistant superintendents, and directors), along with a rotation of other presenters primarily consisting of principals and assistant principals. The only permanent exception to this cadre of internal presenters was that an external consultant who had an extensive background in educational leadership led participants through a series of activities centered upon self-reflection and leadership development.

Furthermore, district stakeholders dually positioned themselves as facilitators of, and *participants in*, the program. For example, as table groups of teachers completed inventories, reflected on a given topic, and carried on collegial dialogue, so did the

district's superintendent, their assistant superintendents, and so on. This dynamic of *participant-presenters* remained a staple of the program throughout TLDP's existence.

***Recruitment and application process.*** The recruitment and application process for TLDP was virtually identical across the first four years of the program. Each spring, principals disseminated information throughout their schools that marketed TLDP to all faculty members. This included a brochure and a recruitment video produced by Superintendent Dr. Arnold that she asked all principals to play at their faculty meetings to spur interest in TLDP. During our interview, Superintendent Dr. Arnold reflected on this recruitment video and the message that she was trying to communicate in promoting her district's vision for the program, stating:

We really wanted to be invitational. We wanted it to be about building leadership capacity. But we also wanted to acknowledge that traditionally and historically, we have *always* had teacher leaders in our district. But the message we intentionally tried to present was that "times are changing" and we have higher standards to reach, more rigorous goals to achieve in terms of student achievement, and we all have to *up our game*. We did *not* want it to be an elite group of special teachers. That's why we made clear our goal that all teachers would eventually participate. Depending on whether you may be pursuing a National Board certification, this may not be a good year to work on this. You could be working on your degree...so this may not be a good year to participate. Eventually you have to think about what will be the right year for you.

The application process for TLDP was orchestrated in three steps. First, teachers who were interested completed a formal written application, secured a signature of approval from their principal, and submitted it directly to Superintendent Dr. Arnold.

Next, Dr. Arnold solicited feedback from each principal about which of their school's candidates they believed would be the best choices to participate in TLDP 's next cohort. Finally, a "TLDP executive committee" convened and made the final selections of who would participate. Then Superintendent Dr. Arnold would personally visit the classroom of each selected teacher, presenting them with a congratulatory message and balloons. This began a district culture of honoring those who had completed TLDP by referring to them as "graduates."

***District's perceptions of TLDP's mutual benefits.*** The program also created what Superintendent Dr. Arnold described as the "showcase opportunity" that TLDP provided for its participants. Describing this perception, Dr. Arnold stated:

When you think about this from the district perspective....for me, even though I strive to be in classrooms a lot, and visit, and do walk-throughs, one of the beauties of TLDP is that, as a superintendent, I spend eight days, plus, plus, plus...eight full days with these 25 participants, getting to know them very well by the questions they ask, by the projects they do, by the conversations we have as we do the whole first session with [our consultant], with the [personality inventories] and some of the other self-assessments in learning about what makes them tick. And so you get a window into what they are currently doing, into their potential....We are *always* thinking strategically, as to who is next in line, who is in our pipeline for these roles...but absolutely, it's a showcase opportunity....But there's a reciprocal piece to that. Not only do I get to know the teachers well.... they get to know me well, and what I believe, and what questions I raise, and what problems I recognize, as well as my team.

And so while the program was inherently not geared toward grooming future administrators for their district, Curriculum Director Elizabeth explained how TLDP had



impacted their district's talent-pool for other types of teacher leadership positions, stating that "...it has groomed a number of teacher leaders in other capacities. Our secondary lead teachers are [TLDP] graduates. Several of our instructional facilitators who are at the elementary level are [TLDP] graduates."

Aside from the situations in which TLDP participants were hired to fill non-supervisory lead teacher and coaching positions, district leaders also shared why they each believed this program was a worthwhile professional development opportunity for teachers. For example, Curriculum Director Rachel stated, "I think early perceptions were, they were really excited about it because it was something new and different and something never done before, and...not elitist, but, you know, 'This is an opportunity I was selected for. This is great!'"

Reflecting on her sense of how the first group of teachers perceived their role in forming the initial cohort of TLDP participants, Superintendent Dr. Arnold stated:

I do think in that first cohort there was a sense of pride that "We were in cohort number one." They were trailblazers. They were risk-takers. We challenged ourselves to make it worthwhile enough that they would tell others, "You have to do that," and that has been perpetuated. And in fact, when we went this year in the spring to tap our next cohort, number five, every school invited their prior participants to come with us. At a couple of schools there were photos being taken of all of our TLDP grads, and boy what a club this has become! I don't mean that in an exclusive way, [but] now there are more of us that 'get it'—more of us who are here to help—and they're encouraging others [to do the same]. This year, I think prior participants are very active about going around and trying to encourage people, "You need to participate! We need you on this team!"

Therefore, TLDP was viewed by district leaders as perhaps *not an elite* institution within their school system; however it was apparent that these leaders *did* perceive this program to be something quite special and a program that was worth continuing for some time.

**Expenses of TLDP.** According to a document in which Superintendent Dr. Arnold summarized findings from a program evaluation of TLDP she had commissioned, the costs of TLDP were paid for through *Title II federal funds* and involved books and supplies, funding substitute teachers, and paying each participant a \$500 stipend. I have presented TLDP's annual expenses in Table 4, below:

Table 4. Annual Program Expenses for TLDP

Supplies	Expenses	Paid Leave	Stipends
Book #1 (Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005)	\$442.30	Substitute teachers were hired for 22 of the 26 participants: Approximate cost was \$100/day, times 7 days of total leave per participant. Some did not need substitutes, such as Counselors.	Stipends paid to each of the 26 participants, at \$500/each, allotted from <i>Title II</i> , federal professional development funds.
Book #2 (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009)	\$1,070.00		
Conflict resolution supplies ( <i>instruments and protocols for personality &amp; team-building surveys / instruments</i> )	\$816.05		
Flash drives for participants	\$320.00		
Tote bags for participants	\$90.00	Expenses for Subs	Expenses for Stipends
Refreshments	\$420.00	\$15,400	\$13,000
Miscellaneous expenses	\$101.28		
<b>Total Supply costs</b>	\$3,259.63		
<b>Total expense of program:</b> \$31,659.63		<b>Total cost per participant:</b> \$1,217.68	

Source: Internal district evaluation of TLDP, program expenses for 2011-2012 cohort.

I will discuss some more about the district leaders' views on the financial costs associated with TLDP later in this chapter. Nevertheless, it was apparent from this data that the majority of program expenses consisted of funding seven days of substitute teachers for most of the participants and providing some compensation for the time all participants invested in this professional development initiative.

**Scope and sequence of TLDP.** The scope and sequence of TLDP was developed based on (a) the goals and objectives set forth by the district, (b) the background research completed by district leaders, (c) specific areas of expertise and passion brought to the table by the various district leaders, and (d) connections district leaders drew between certain activities and their programmatic objectives. I will now provide outlines of the sessions that were implemented through the first two years of TLDP as well as the revised series of sessions that comprised the third and fourth years of this program. There were also supplemental readings (e.g., Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005) and a culminating group project (to be discussed later in this chapter) assigned to all participants. Moreover, as the program evolved over a four-year period, the online learning management system, Moodle, was added to facilitate ongoing, asynchronous discussion among participants as well as to distribute and archive presentation materials from each session. I will first present the original scope and sequence of TLDP's various sessions:

- Session 1: *Developing self-awareness and leadership capacity*—Participants engaged in various personality and change-style surveys; other self-assessments

that are geared toward increasing self-awareness; and awareness of the diversity in teammates'/colleagues' personality styles and tolerance to change.

- Session 2: *Developing effective teams*—Participants focused on building trust, the dynamics and functionality of effective teams, dialoging about cultural awareness (e.g., how to practice culturally responsive communication), and the dynamics of conflict.
- Session 3: *Developing organizational awareness and capacity*—Participants learned about the facets of organizational culture and were introduced to aspects of change processes.
- Session 4: *Developing effective PLC's/working with colleagues*—Participants learned about the nature of competent mentoring and coaching of others and discussed the elements of effective PLC's and schools that develop communities of best practices. This was based heavily on the work of Richard DuFour (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010).
- Session 5: *Transforming school culture in order to reach shared goals*—Participants learned about elements of high-performing schools' cultures and ways to define and assess a school's overall climate. This session was extended by participants being required to administer a *school climate survey* to their schools. Moreover, TLDP participants were required by Superintendent Dr. Arnold to share the school climate survey data with their principal and to have a follow-up discussion with them about the implicit meaning of these results.
- Session 6: *Leading change (part 1 of 2)*—Participants learned about the magnitude of first order and second order changes (Waters & Cameron, 2007), which delineate how districts/schools might extend their existing practices and adapt deep-seated beliefs and practices to contend with systemic problems of practice. Session leaders and participants also discussed building self-efficacy, collaborating with colleagues, and the role of PLC's in driving change.
- Session 7: *Leading change (part 2 of 2)*—Participants learned about various conditions for change and the diverse roles that people can take in promoting, supporting, or inhibiting change. They also discussed a gap between knowing problems exist and actually taking action to solve them. A fable, "Our Iceberg is Melting," (Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005) was used each year to help participants conceptualize the various conditions of change and roles people may play. Moreover, this was the session where participants played a *simulation-based*

*board game* to role-play a hypothetical change initiative within their school district.

- Session 8: *Summation of what was learned*—Participants presented their group projects, which were an ongoing component of the program that extended participants' time commitments beyond the scope of the initial seven workshop sessions. School administrators were invited to view their teachers' presentations. Participants were also assigned an end-of-program reflection activity and given until around July 1<sup>st</sup> to submit these written reflections to their superintendent and principal.

The following outline briefly describes the scope and sequence of TLDP as it was implemented for years *three* and *four* of this program, hence highlighting some of the changes that were made by the district:

- Session 1: *Developing self-awareness and leadership capacity*—stayed the same
- Session 2: *Developing effective teams*—stayed the same
- Session 3: *Developing effective PLC's/working with colleagues*—Participants learned about the nature of competent mentoring and coaching of others, and they discussed the elements of effective PLC's.
- Session 4: *Developing professional communities of best practices*—Participants learned about areas of instructional focus for the district. This included work on project-based learning and elements of how teachers can design lessons so that students may collaborate, build communication skills, develop creativity, and exercise critical thinking (i.e., *21<sup>st</sup> century skills*).
- Session 5: *Transforming school culture in order to reach shared goals*—stayed the same
- Session 6: *High-performing schools with high poverty*—Participants engaged in activities and discussions that were meant to build their perspective about the conditions of poverty which were prevalent in their district. They also learned about some best practices that could support higher-performing schools amidst these conditions. This was based heavily on the work of Eric Jensen (e.g., Jensen, 2009).

- Session 7: *The complexity of change*—Participants’ time spent on the elements and complexity of change was condensed down to one session. Half of this day was comprised of playing the simulation-based board game about implementing change in their district. Moreover, the context for this session was still set ahead of time through participants reading Kotter and Rathgeber’s (2005) book.
- Session 8: *Summation of what was learned*—Participants still presented their group projects and were assigned the end-of-program reflection activity. However, the dynamic of this session evolved some. Namely, the culmination of cohort #4 marked the first time that the *following year’s* participants were also invited along with their administrators to watch teachers from their school present their TLDP projects. This was characterized by Superintendent Dr. Arnold as “having the end in mind.”

Data from interviews and document review indicated that the culminating group project requirement assigned to each TLDP cohort was a major component of this program. Therefore, I will now present this component in more depth.

**Project requirement of TLDP.** This sub-section has been organized into three topics: an overview of the TLDP project, some examples of such projects, and implications that this requirement had upon the nature of TLDP. In Chapter Five, I will present what teachers believed they learned from engaging in this work.

**Overview of the TLDP project.** One fixture of TLDP was a requirement that participants from each school were to spend sufficient time outside of the monthly sessions working with partners from their own school to plan and complete an action research-style project. Before commencing their project, each group had to secure the support and permission of their principal in order to proceed. By the time of this case

study, each team was also required to complete a “Project Proposal Form,” which included the following prompts:

- “Clearly define the school or district need your group intends to address.”
- “Describe your project idea to effectively address this need.”
- “Describe your plan for involving key stakeholders, including your administrator, in the project design and implementation.”
- “Describe the timeframe and outline for the overall project (please be specific).”
- “Describe expected outcomes for the proposed project.”
- “Describe the data you will collect to monitor and measure the proposed outcomes for the project.”

By the fourth year of TLDP, the district had also further developed a rubric they had been using to evaluate each group’s project. This updated rubric prompted evaluators and participants to consider a rating of 1 (the lowest) to 3 (the highest) across a set of seven indicators, summarized below:

- *Project goals*—clarity of the goals; extent to which they encompassed the major themes of TLDP; extent to which they were research-based and had depth; and evidence that participants obtained support, input, and guidance from their administrator.
- *Leadership and initiative*—extent to which the group demonstrated vision and follow-through; extent to which they gained consensus from, and communicated with, relevant stakeholders.
- *Collaboration*—extent to which effective teamwork and awareness of the individual members’ learning needs were demonstrated; extent to which the group involved other school personnel and those impacted by the project.
- *Responsibility and productivity*—extent to which participants demonstrated excitement and commitment, and took steps to motivate others and produce high quality individual/group work; level of diligence in overcoming barriers and challenges associated with the project.

- *Problem Solving*—extent to which participants provided plausible solutions and ways to measure these in response to problems addressed through the project; the nature of how data was used to inform decision making and monitoring of project outcomes.
- *Self-Regulation/Reflection*—consistency with which teams sought feedback and demonstrated reflectiveness/openness to critique from district-level leaders; clarity with which participants identified ways that the project contributed to their personal and professional growth.
- *Presentation*—extent to which participants presented their projects with passion and excitement and generated interest from the audience; extent to which the presentation included clear findings/supporting evidence, conveyed a district perspective, and clearly addressed alternative or opposing perspectives (i.e., live at session #8 and through the use of presentation tools, videos, etc.).

As was described in the summary above of “*self-regulation/reflection*,” each team was assigned a “project coach” to help keep them on track for success with their TLDP project. Project coaches were district-level leaders (including three participants of this study) who were charged with meeting periodically with teams *outside* of the TLDP sessions to discuss groups’ progress with their project and provide them with feedback. Superintendent Dr. Arnold also emailed participants early in this process and provided a mixture of encouragement and constructive feedback meant to get teams on track for success.

***Examples of TLDP projects.*** I will now provide a summary of four examples of group projects that TLDP participants completed. I chose to present these projects as they represented three different levels of school (i.e., elementary, middle, high school) and they were varied in their areas of focus.



*Project #1: Professional certification for high school students.* One group conducted a student advocacy project meant to increase participation and success rate on a professional certification exam. Group members led presentations to parents and then students and coordinated a celebration for those students who earned certain distinctions through this exam. These teachers made recommendations about ways to incorporate this assessment into their school's improvement plan, ways to educate students and staff on the benefits of this initiative, and specific strategies that were found to help their students perform at higher levels on the certification exam.

*Project #2: Faculty morale and climate.* One group focused on building cohesiveness and higher morale in their school after that school had recently experienced over 20% turnover in its teaching faculty. This group focused on school climate and revised the survey protocol that was used with all schools for TLDP by adding questions that would elicit qualitative responses versus numeric ratings. They then took this feedback and put in place measures such as increasing support for early-career teachers, organizing social gatherings for teachers away from school, and instituting a system of pairing up teachers with anonymous partners who would place encouraging notes in the other teacher's mailbox throughout the year.

*Project #3: Promoting global awareness for students.* One group supported their school's goals to improve in STEM instruction (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) as well as elements of the NCPTS that prompt teachers to promote global awareness for their students. They addressed this topic by engaging students and

teachers in a variety of activities couched largely around online, virtual collaboration and communication. For example, students wrote to global pen pals and organized local artifacts to communicate about North Carolina culture to international students. Teachers built their capacity to collaborate internationally with other educators through a variety of online video and communication platforms. The TLDP participants facilitated PLC meetings whereby they taught their colleagues how to use the necessary tools for this project. They also piloted for their school the aspects of this project that dealt directly with student instruction.

*Project #4: Arts-based community outreach.* One group supported their school's goals to provide more holistic educational experiences for children and increase community engagement in the school. This was approached by orchestrating a series of events in which students and teachers explored their artistic talents to create memorabilia that was later auctioned off at a fundraiser to benefit research for a prevalent childhood disease. The project consisted of galvanizing student leadership for the project as well as recruiting and coordinating support for this initiative from among school, district, and community stakeholders.

***Implications of TLDP's project requirement.*** During our interviews, district leaders indicated that TLDP participants had consistently expressed their desire for additional time to be allocated within one of the program's eight sessions to actually work on this project. However, the district persisted in disallowing this and instead required participants to collaborate, plan, and implement these projects on their own

time. However, feedback from participants did lead the district to create a revised rubric (discussed earlier) as well as fine-tune the nature of how project coaches were assigned and how they provided support for their respective groups. Though Curriculum Director Elizabeth perceived the quality of participants' work was improving due in part to these adjustments, she commented on how the basic requirements of the project remained unchanged through the program's history, stating:

The expectation for them has always been the same. Now, the quality of the projects has continued to improve. One of the reasons for that is, for us, due to the rubric. We felt like they needed more guidance, so the rubric was a piece of that. We still feel like, every year we get feedback, [and] they wish that they had a day a year to just work on their project. And we're not going to give them a day to work on their project. We feel like that is an effort to say, "Tell us what to do. Give us more of a box." We don't give them the box. We don't give them directions at all. It is very self-driven. I think when you do that, you are challenging the teachers to think beyond themselves. And some find it hard to do, unfortunately. So it's that struggle that they don't like. They get over it, but they don't like that initial struggle, to not know all the answers, to be that learner again. So we created the rubric to give them more of a guideline.

Somewhat contrary to these perceptions, it was also evident from my interviews that district-level leaders held in high regard the magnitude of time and effort that teachers had put forth with their TLDP projects. For example, Curriculum Director Elizabeth also shared that their district had admired the initiative that one group had developed for their school—orchestrating a "...conference-style..." professional development day that offered differentiated session topics for their teachers—and that

district leaders then “...took that model and did a differentiated [professional development] day, two times, for the whole district.... They did it at a school level and [then] we did it at the district level.”

Related to the TLDP project, Superintendent Dr. Arnold also reflected on the overall amount of work in which TLDP participants engaged inside and outside of the eight workshop sessions. Here she disclosed how this was largely why their district began an unadvertised practice of paying all TLDP participants a \$500 stipend upon their completion of the program, stating:

It has never been advertised in any of the information and we never wanted it to be about earning a stipend, but we found money the first year in our Title II funds, I think it is, to pay a \$500 stipend. But we did not tell them about it until they were all done.... [It was] a one-time “thank you” for all the extra effort. Because there’s homework, the project is significant, they have invested a lot of time and energy in the project, and so we just wanted to say “thank you” with a one-time stipend. I’m sure word has passed at this point, but we have been able to sustain it each year.

Therefore, it appeared that even though district leaders resisted teachers’ requests to provide them with more time in workshops to attend to their projects, this element of TLDP played a role in district leaders’ decision to provide additional incentives to their teachers for completing the program.

### **Summary of the Nature of TLDP**

It was evident that district leaders planned and implemented TLDP due directly to their perceptions that they needed to improve their district’s ability to satisfy North

Carolina's mandate that all teachers must demonstrate leadership. District leaders focused their program development efforts upon a set of four objectives, each of which aligned with elements of Standard 1 of the NCPTS. Each objective was meant to translate into specific programmatic activities. However, as I will discuss in the presentation of additional district-level interview data, district leaders did hold somewhat differing views on precisely *how* these objectives were actually promoted through TLDP.

The scope and sequence of TLDP was revised between the second and third year of the program's existence. These changes framed the district's evolving preferences to tone down the extent to which TLDP covered school culture and bolster the extent to which the program promoted instructional best practices and an awareness of how to positively impact students living in poverty. District leaders' perceptions about some of these changes will be presented later in the chapter.

Furthermore, it was apparent that the district intended for the collaborative, action research-style project to provide their participants with a structured opportunity to enact various components of teacher leadership upon which their program was focused. This project demonstrated for district leaders a considerable amount of work in which teachers had to engage and was, hence, a driving force behind the district's decision to provide monetary compensation to TLDP participants. Despite requests from participants that time ought to be allocated during program sessions to work on the project, district leaders stayed the course and required that it be planned and

implemented outside of TLDP's eight sessions. Ultimately, this action research-style project became something which spurred some innovation and practices that were adopted for the entire school system.

### **Presentation of Additional District-level Interview Data**

In this section, I will present additional findings from district-level interviews that I conducted. These findings have been organized thematically around district leaders' perceptions of teacher leadership, their perceptions of a school district's role in distributing leadership, their views on the ways in which TLDP's formal goals and objectives manifested through the program, and some additional perceptions they shared about successes and critiques of TLDP. Furthermore, I found that these data directly connected this case study to the *distributed leadership lens* of my adopted conceptual framework, discussed in Chapter One.

#### **District Leaders' Perceptions of Teacher Leadership**

As part of this case study, I asked all participants (district administrators and teachers) to describe what the term "teacher leadership" meant to them. As part of examining case study data through two different lenses (i.e., district-level/distributive; teacher-centric/constructivist), I will now present how each of the four district leaders responded to this question. As this data illustrates, these four participants had varied perceptions about the nature of teacher leadership that ranged across such themes as modeling professionalism, expertise and credibility, collaboration with colleagues, advocacy in the profession, taking initiative to develop curriculum, proactive problem-

solving, and leading their colleagues. This appeared to highlight the complex nature of this construct as well as some lack of unanimity among district leaders about how they defined teacher leadership.

When asked what teacher leadership meant to her, Curriculum Director Rachel differentiated between two general settings in which this can occur and expressed her perception that teachers in either setting must exhibit credibility as a practitioner:

To me, I think teacher leadership is just helping teachers by modeling, so that you model that professionalism.... [First], I think you can be a leader from within. And [second], there are some teacher-leaders who I think are in [formal] teacher leadership roles, such as my instructional facilitators.... But I think you have to have teacher knowledge and really good content knowledge. You have to be seen by your colleagues as a reputable and knowledgeable person. I think in order to be an effective leader you have to kind of earn that title, too. But I also think that if you're someone who's willing to stand up for what is right, stand up for the kids, make sure you do what's right, and you're always looking for new ideas and sharing resources, you're sharing ideas, you're always trying to make things better in the school, working as a partner, collaboratively, with others. And I think you can do that from within or in an assigned role. But I think, to me, a leader is someone who is always working to make instruction better for our students in our school.

Curriculum Director Elizabeth shared her view that teacher leaders focused on taking initiative to identify and solve problems in their educational settings and were not afraid to speak out and advocate for their beliefs:

Teacher leadership, to me, means teachers taking action, taking charge of issues, and doing things that need to be done—seeing a need and filling it. So, teachers not waiting for someone to tell them, “Hey I need you to [do this or that],” but taking the initiative within the school to form a

group to study data, to solve a problem, to get something done. From that level to doing something in their room, in terms of in their own classrooms, in terms of making sure their students have everything that they need, the resources they need to learn. They are not going to wait for everything to be handed down from central office, or the front office, or DPI (State Department of Public Instruction) to put all the resources in their hands to teach their children. They're actually going to go out and find what they need that's the most appropriate resources for their students. Teacher leaders are going to be leading, again, in their profession. They're going to say, you know, "This isn't right that we're not getting raises every year, so I'm going to advocate for myself in a professional way. This isn't right that we don't have a voice in education, so I'm going to speak on behalf of my colleagues and myself. This isn't right that we are not represented in this capacity, so I am going to speak here, professionally." I think all those things are teacher leadership.

Assistant Superintendent Beverly also spoke about the credibility one must have as a classroom teacher in order to be considered a teacher leader, stating:

It is hard to capture in one or two words...but to be a teacher leader, like in the Katzenmeyer text that I always use in my session (i.e. Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009), before one becomes a teacher leader, they need to have credibility and have to be a leader in a classroom. So first and foremost, you have to be a strong teacher yourself in all aspects, from classroom management, to instruction, to working with your colleagues, and those types of things. I think being a teacher leader is the one who demonstrates the North Carolina standards. We have set now a level of one [going] beyond just what's happening in one's classroom. It has an impact with leading professional development and PLC'S, even, in the classroom and district level.

In addition, Assistant Superintendent Beverly shared her opinion about people who she viewed in her career as *not* having met the threshold of what she considered to be a teacher leader but who later went on to become school administrators. This



segued into a caveat about how to best support teachers' development as leaders while also exhibiting sensitivity to their varied preferences for how much they want to take on outside of the realm of their classroom. Here, Beverly stated:

One of the things we have to be cautious of, and I respect, is that some teachers just want to be left alone to teach in isolation. So I think you really have to honor the teacher. But if the teacher is really passionate about the new standards and the whole new push about leadership, you have to help them to see that leadership has many faces. And it does not mean that you have to serve on every committee in the district. On the surface level, it can just mean that you are a strong mentor. It could be that you are a great chairperson in the school, that type of thing. In the end, you have to help them to understand that [teacher leadership] can have many faces and you are not expected...to do whatever and everything. You have to be really cautious about that kind of thing. One thing you don't want is to burn people out completely. And it's not like you are expecting them to do this and suddenly be another administrator in the building [simply] because you believe in teacher leadership. I think it just varies by teacher to teacher.

Of the four district-level participants, Superintendent Dr. Arnold appeared to speak most extensively about a perceived connection between teacher leadership, advocacy in the profession, and *shared/distributed* forms of leadership. Here, she offered the following response:

Teacher leadership means being prepared to take on various roles...in the classroom, in the school, in the district, and in the profession, where you can be a voice for and an advocate for what is best for the students. Meaning you can advocate in your school improvement team if you don't believe that the reading interventions are making a difference for the students in your class. And you can help create that sense of urgency that "This is a need for our school! We are never going to reach our goals if we do not address this, or how we can do this." You have the power to

ask those questions. You have the responsibility to bring that to the table to say that “This is not working. How can we find better solutions for this?” So being a problem solver—a problem finder and a problem solver—in the context of what we need for our students. That may mean anything from leading professional development, to leading curriculum design, to assessment design, to interpreting and disaggregating data. It’s all of those pieces. But it’s also understanding the change process, and what it takes, and how difficult it is in this complex setting we have with all these different stakeholders.

I will now move on to a presentation of district-level participants’ various perceptions related to distributed leadership.

### **District Leaders’ Perceptions of Distributed Leadership**

During part of my interview with district-level leaders, I asked the question, *“What do you see as school district-level administrators’ most important roles in distributing leadership throughout a school system?”* I also guided these discussions toward the context of this case study by examining how they perceived TLDP had perhaps contributed to their notions of distributed leadership. Therefore, district leaders’ references to the construct of distributed leadership were woven throughout their perceptions of how TLDP benefited their school system as well as through personal reflections some participants shared about their own roles and careers. This data indicated that district leaders generally viewed distributed leadership through the lenses of *shared/de-centered leadership* and *capacity-building* (Mayrowetz, 2008). I have organized this section to reflect each of these themes.

**Distributed leadership as shared leadership.** District-level participants offered various views about their role in distributing leadership. One theme that emerged was a perception that district administrators needed to intentionally and strategically provide opportunities for sharing leadership responsibilities with others. For example, Superintendent Dr. Arnold highlighted a strategic planning initiative that had recently been completed for their school system and how TLDP related somewhat to this act of distributing leadership amongst a variety of stakeholders. Here, she stated:

Well, I think the part [TLDP] plays is building the capacity for teachers to step *into* the role when we want to share leadership. [A district-level leaders' role is] also modeling shared leadership. An example might be, when we went to our last Strategic Planning process, we worked with our community, and to get to a point where we had clear themes, we needed to address things like closing gaps [and] a new way for our kids to become globally aware. It might have been [for example] the literacy piece [or] integrating technology. So we had these seven themes. And rather than to go off in the corner and write the goals, we created seven task forces that included principals, assistant principals, teachers—and they were assigned the work of: Research the topic, what we are already doing in the district, what our best practices are in the area, where 's the gap between what we are doing and our best practices, and what might be the recommendations that we would suggest—the accomplishments that we need the next three years to close the gap. So this strategic plan came bubbling up in every corner. People had ownership. People even had some passions in some of these areas! So just involving people, it's being inclusive.

Superintendent Dr. Arnold then extended her response to describe more specifically her perceptions of how TLDP impacted their school system's capacity to distribute/share leadership, stating:

So, [TLDP] has added to the army of prepared people who can step into significant leadership roles *and* to the group that's out there looking for solutions to some of our problems—not waiting for the principal to say we need to work on that.

When asked about the connection between teacher leadership development and distributed leadership, Assistant Superintendent Beverly offered her perceptions of how some TLDP participants have walked away with a broader perspective of the nature of school-wide leadership and improvement:

The way I have seen it play out is, it never has been an intent or a goal of the [TLDP] sessions, but I think one of the big “ah-ha’s” is that we have moved into this era of, “principals and assistant principals will be the instructional leaders.” One of the benefits I have seen from our administrators that plays out across the schools is that these participants, it does not take them long to realize that “These administrators have a lot on their plate, and we have a stake in this, and we play a role in the school.” So [now] it is not always seen as a principal or assistant principal’s job to drive all of the work in school. [For example,] our continuous improvement plan, it is a plan for the whole school and the [school-based] teams focus working on it. I think that it’s been a win for everybody. I think it has served multiple purposes and the reason for this was for the teacher to understand [school improvement] more [and] about what we mean by teacher leadership. From that, we have seen impact on the culture of the school, the perspective of how teachers see administrators, their roles and how they have a stake in it, and a much bigger picture than we had imagined starting [TLDP].

Moreover, district-level participants expressed an ongoing need to distribute the responsibilities of curriculum and professional development throughout their school system. In particular, Curriculum Director Elizabeth described the challenges their

district faced in response to the broad scale shifts brought upon by North Carolina's adoption of the Common Core State Standards (2010):

In the education profession, not only did North Carolina decide we are going to change some standards—we are going to change *all* standards at *all* grade levels at one time with the Common Core and Essential Standards....It's a challenge for a small district like us. It's huge! For a small district like us that doesn't have a huge curriculum department...at best, we were operating with ten people. So it was about one per school. It's just mind blowing that we were expected to provide that intense support to every grade level in every subject. I mean literally, every subject! But we had our teacher leaders, our graduates of [TLDP] because of what we did, luckily.

Elizabeth then went on to describe their district's response to these challenges, a perceived success story that she viewed as a byproduct of their having implemented TLDP:

We created a team...a Common Core team. It was comprised of our district staff and our teacher leaders, we developed PLC'S, district PLC's with these teacher leaders. And our teacher leaders drove the [professional development], drove the unit development, they drove everything with this change. I mean we helped them and we supported them, but they were the connection with the teachers in the classroom. I mean, they were the teachers in the classroom! And so, I don't think we could have done this massive shift over if we had not have had our teacher leaders that were already prepared, that had been trained as what it meant be a true teacher leader, and beefed up their skills, and had an understanding of what that meant....They knew we no longer expected from them that they would sit in their classroom and expect things to be handed to them, as a graduate of [TLDP].

**Distributed leadership as capacity-building.** The second primary theme that emerged from district-level interviews was the view that distributed leadership is visionary and relates to capacity-building in others. Illustrating this theme, Curriculum Directors Rachel and Elizabeth spoke directly about their own experiences with leadership development and the nature of their professional roles. Through these responses, they essentially equated effective distributed leadership with building teachers' capacities to an extent where the formal leader is no longer needed for their intended results to be perpetuated. Rachel purposefully chose to reflect on experiences that were outside of the context of TLDP, stating:

I think one of the ones that's been instrumental for me has been [my mentor] (name omitted)...because she always says, "My role, my job, is to cultivate leadership in other people...because I'm not always going to be here." I try to think of it that way. If I leave tomorrow, I don't want the initiatives, everything that I've done, all the knowledge I have and everything to go out the door with me. So I want to have a group of people who can do standards-based math on their own and not just say, "Okay, she's gone. We're not going to have to do this anymore!" ... So, I feel like a district leader really has got to be a visionary. They've got to be innovative and they've really got to get people to buy-in to what this is so that they understand the background, the rationale, why I'm doing this, why it's important to do this, why it's best for the kids to do it, [and] how to do it so I can actually implement it.

Curriculum Director Rachel also described an activity she had utilized with a group of graduate students to demonstrate the "web of influence" that leaders can have upon others in the educational profession when they focus on capacity-building (explaining that this was first demonstrated to her by her aforementioned mentor). This

activity involved getting a group of teachers in a room and similar to how one might create of visual representation of the spread of a virus, Rachel had one person—the influential leader—start with a long piece of string. That person then connected this string to other people in the group who they had influenced professionally in some way. Then that person connected the string with others they had influenced, and so on. Commenting on the metaphorical purpose of this activity, Curriculum Director Rachel then stated, “I think that’s our role: just to empower teachers to go out and be the best they can be and [in turn] help others be the best *they* can be.”

At two different points in our interview, Curriculum Director Elizabeth also described her motivation to build capacity in others through the specific lens of curriculum development and implementation. The first time was when she was explaining how other school system leaders had commented on their district’s approach to implementing the revised state curriculum standards. Through this description, Elizabeth then also alluded to some unintended negative effects of teachers becoming so invested in curriculum development, as state-level policy makers were in the midst of a *possible repeal* of the Common Core State Standards in North Carolina:

We took the approach that, we felt like our teachers needed to learn the standards, writing curriculum units themselves, getting into those standards. We knew it would be a slower process [but] we felt that was the way to go. Most of the districts we dealt with in the state felt that it was more important for the teachers to get their hands on [curriculum guides] first. They had their district folks working on pacing guides, unit plans that they handed out to their teachers from the district level.... [However], our philosophy was—still is—that the teachers need to know

their standards, struggle with the content, and own the content. And they're not going to do that if we hand them the stuff.... It would not have helped any teacher to make the shifts that they needed to make with the Common Core and the new standards. Now, our teachers who are just now getting comfortable with their new units...are very frustrated with this whole concept that Common Core might go away. They feel they are just getting the hang of it and are very happy with the new standards—not all of them, you know, but more are than not.

The second time Curriculum Director Elizabeth commented on capacity-building as a form of distributed leadership was when she reflected on her own professional stake in helping teachers become more independent with curriculum design and instruction, stating:

One of the leaders who I respect and listen to a lot says, “You should, as a leader, be working yourself out of a job,” [though] not literally. I always would be looking to replace yourself, building others’ capacity around you. I believe that it is my job as a leader: to build other people’s capacity around me. I think that is very true. I don’t think I should have everybody depend on me, because then I would be working myself to death! I would love a day where every teacher in this district was so capable that they did not need me anymore. The [district’s] teachers had it all down. Then I could go to the next district...then they are ready for me somewhere else! That would be ok. That will be a job well done. That is sort of how I look at what I do here: to build the capacity of others.

Finally, Assistant Superintendent Beverly discussed the nature of capacity-building within the realm of district-level leadership, particularly as it related to TLDP. One instance of this was when Beverly explained how Curriculum Director Elizabeth’s own development as their curriculum director was one determining factor in why they were able to modify TLDP’s scope and sequence to encompass a greater focus upon



instructional best practices. The second instance was when Beverly echoed the notion that effective leaders institutionalize practices that outlast their tenure in that role. Here she discussed capacity-building within their own ranks of district leadership by reflecting on the role *she* would need to play for TLDP upon Superintendent Dr. Arnold's impending retirement (something which I have purposefully treated as extraneous to the nature of this study). Speaking to these succession plans, Assistant Superintendent Beverly stated:

Just from my previous roles, for many years, my passion has been teachers, and of course children...Since I left the classroom, my focus for 14 or 15 years—my basic interest at the district level—has basically been teachers. It has been since the beginning of this project. So I feel like I will play an important role in helping to continue to drive this [program].... [Superintendent] Dr. [Arnold] and I have had many conversations regarding this prior to her retirement. One thing that Dr. [Arnold] has said is that the mark of a leader, when he or she leaves, the work goes on. No doubt, the academy was her passion, her baby—she loved it and it's something she was very serious about. Though she always had ownership, multiple people have ownership of this. It wasn't just hers only, but it was obvious about her passion and her love for it. But we built the capacity to sustain it.

As the data above indicated, district-level leaders expressed perspectives on distributed leadership that were sometimes quite similar to one another but that were in another sense informed by their diverse experiences and philosophies. It was evident that the themes of *shared leadership*, *capacity-building*, and *legacy-building* had dominated their collective line of thinking on this topic.

## District Leaders' Views on TLDP's Formal Objectives

In this section, I will focus more closely on the four district leaders' perceptions about the ways in which TLDP manifested their school system's four stated goals and objectives for the program. This data also provides a more elaborate context about the sorts of experiences which program participants discussed during this case study. To review, these objectives were: 1) build leadership skills and capacity among all teachers; 2) improve the professional practice of teachers; 3) build a culture of shared accountability and responsibility; and 4) demonstrate ethical principles and uphold the state's Code of Ethics for educators.

**Building leadership skills and capacity.** Each of the district-level participants similarly shared that TLDP's first objective was focused through its initial two sessions that centered upon self-discovery and communication. They also reported that this theme was meant to pervade the entire program *and* project requirement. Curriculum Director Rachel summarized her views on this topic, indicating her belief that TLDP did a better job of meeting certain objectives over others:

As far as building the leadership skills and capacity among all teachers, that strikes a chord great with what is in the sessions. Because I do think most of the sessions are geared towards teachers knowing themselves as *learners* and knowing themselves as *leaders*, and developing skills so they can communicate better with people...so they can be more effective leaders—not only when they're communicating with students but with administrators, teachers, and leaders within the district, and also colleagues. So, I think that first one is all about standard one and standard five, definitely (i.e., of the NCPTS: demonstrating leadership and being a reflective practitioner). I think that's really important, and [TLDP]

addresses that one well. I *don't* think it addresses [objective] four very well (i.e., ethics).

Superintendent Dr. Arnold reflected on how their district had approached this first objective to build more open communication and team-building across their schools and district. Through this, she shared her views on what made TLDP a unique professional development experience for those teachers who participated in the program:

We try to make the [TLDP] experience a safe place to talk about anything as we are presenting the sessions, and [now] we also...use a closed Moodle course to exchange ideas, thoughts, and problem-solving, and just to use it as a safe forum for discussing problems. I think when teachers have experienced that and they feel they don't have that at their school, they long for that. And when they go through that session where they dissect school culture, survey information from their peers, from their faculty, some of this stuff pops up, and then some problem solving occurs.... [Teachers also] recognize the importance of their continued learning, and they acknowledge they are more attentive to reading periodicals, and research articles, attending professional development, staying abreast of best practices, research and trends. [Also], the personal self-awareness that comes out of the session with [our consultant] is eye-opening! They leave that with [a sense of], "Wow! That's so 'right on!' How did they know?" Because teachers have not gone through—you know this is normal in the corporate world or through the leadership preparation courses—but teachers haven't really experienced [personality inventories] or some of these reflective, self-awareness interest inventories. They learn about their personal strengths; the teammates they are working with in their PLC. Even though they may be very different people, there is a growing appreciation of the differences for what you bring to the table and what I bring to the table. And it is better if we are not all alike. Admiring and appreciating our differences, and your individual strengths which are unique to you, and my strengths which are unique to me: we put that all together to make a high-performing team.

Curriculum Director Elizabeth echoed the other three district leaders' descriptions of how sessions dealing with self-reflection and communication between PLC team members were meant to build leadership capacity among TLDP participants. Moreover, she shared her hope that TLDP would evolve its practice of using Moodle, to more consistently spur asynchronous dialogue amid participants during their month-long breaks between each session of the program, reasoning that "As I'm working with my PLC and talking at school, I can [still] keep these thoughts constant."

**Improving teachers' professional practice.** For the most part, district-level leaders understood the second stated objective of TLDP —*improving teachers' professional practice*—to mean that participants would further develop as teacher leaders through a concerted focus on instructional best practices (e.g., student-centered learning approaches, culturally-responsive pedagogy in a community rife with poverty, etc.). For example, Curriculum Director Elizabeth echoed Assistant Superintendent Beverly's reflection on how a specific session of TLDP was dedicated to instructional best practices. Curriculum Director Elizabeth explained the pedagogical underpinnings of TLDP's second stated objective:

We do one session on professional practice because the first place that teachers have to start as a leader is in their classrooms. And so once we get past the "Who am I? Who are you?" kind of stuff, we use the Katzenmeyer (2009) book as our foundational textbook. Katzenmeyer's foundational premise is that teachers are first leaders in the classroom. We believe that too. You know, you can't go out leading in the profession if you're not teaching your kids. You lose your credibility if all your kids are miserably failing....We talk about research-based

instructional strategies. This year, our focus will be on PBL (Project-based learning). Our district has changed its focus to project-based learning, writing, and how to help teachers develop instructional tools to help the students learn.

Curriculum Director Rachel also described TLDP's focus on instructional best practices and added that to her, improving professional practice was "...very much tied to instruction; tied to them basically understanding how to become better teachers. Which...can also be not just instruction but communication practices, knowing yourself, [and] some of the things that move over from the first [objective], too."

**Developing a culture of shared accountability.** The district-level leaders centered their discussions of TLDP's third stated objective—*developing a culture of shared accountability*—upon the program's focus on developing collaborative approaches to school improvement and accountability. For example, Curriculum Director Rachel stated:

I think that this started as getting everyone out of that individual mode [of] "I'm in my classroom and the door's shut" and more collaborative. We've discussed data, [that] it's not just my data with my name on it. Look at the kids as a whole at the school, how we all have a responsibility to help them. That was kind of this culture of shared accountability that we wanted to be developed, because teaching is still such an isolated practice in so many ways.

Superintendent Dr. Arnold also elaborated on the notion that teachers demonstrated leadership by taking personal ownership and accountability for their

students—and by extension their schools’—collective successes and failures, stating that to her, it meant that educators should continuously ask themselves:

What do I need to do to change that result? It means everybody has a part to play in the school’s success and take responsibility for it. A lot of this is [school and district] culture work. And what many of our respondents [to internal evaluations] have talked about is that now they are a force for positive thinking, and for reinforcing positive behavior, and nipping the negative talk and the inappropriate, unprofessional talk that may occur, or the anti-student talk that may occur. Advocating for students, standing up for what’s right, and being a positive role model in the school, is what they tell us: that they have found the confidence and the “guts,” I’ll say! They’ve found that voice to stand up for that....The [TLDP] sessions are very interactive. We’re all constantly saying what we believe in and what we think.

Assistant Superintendent Beverly directly referenced sessions led by Curriculum Director Elizabeth as those which directly promoted TLDP’s third objective. Furthermore, when asked how she viewed the ways in which they had promoted this objective, Curriculum Director Elizabeth shared her views on how TLDP had caused some teachers to feel more connected to the successes of their school:

Well, I think that’s the one realization that you can really see—visibly see teachers make—throughout the year, particularly with their work on the project. As they reflect on the learning through their project...they [see they] can no longer stay just to themselves any more. They see how much impact they have made to the community, and their school. Not only that they got something out of it, but they impacted the students.... [During one project presentation, the TLDP participants] talked about how they see that they can’t just not be involved, and what they do affects the school in a positive way. So the retro is that if they don’t get involved, it’s going to affect the school in a negative way.

Furthermore, Curriculum Director Elizabeth generalized her views of how the district's focus on shared accountability had manifested throughout TLDP's history, stating:

While I see that not everybody that's a [TLDP] graduate is out there changing the school, on fire, advocating for every student—I can't say that—but I can say that we have a cadre of people across the district, that they're out there, that their principals can call on them, that they're doing the things that need to be done. You know, they're leading PLC's, they're leading in the district, some of them have moved on to become IF's now, Instructional Facilitators, leading in their schools. Most of them are just leading in the classroom and leading [effective TLDP] projects... throughout their schools. Not to do it for us—for [TLDP]—but to do it for their schools.

Therefore, it was evident that the district's focus on shared accountability was manifesting an underlying motive for their participants to distribute what they were learning through TLDP into the cultures of their schools. There were two primary vehicles for this distribution. The first was through their action-research style project which was meant to spur collaboration with colleagues. The second was through developing participants' abilities to help lead school-based and district-wide PLC's. Each of these was intended to help drive the district's focus on student data and an optimistically-minded problem-solving approach to improving instruction for all students.

**Demonstrating ethical principles.** While interview data revealed that district leaders were uncertain that they had sufficiently integrated TLDP's fourth objective—

*demonstrating ethical principles*—into their program, they did offer some specific examples about how this was done. Assistant Superintendent Beverly explained that they had planned on covering this objective in TLDP because it was included in the new teaching standards, adding:

I think that when it's part of their evaluation, then it's something that was important that we wanted to make sure we stressed throughout all of these sessions, too: how important it is to uphold the ethics and be an ethical person in your practice.

Superintendent Dr. Arnold also shared her perspective, speaking more broadly about a need for teachers to consider ethics in how they approach their roles as leaders for their students and in the school community:

I think it's just holding our profession to high standards, [so] that when you're out in the community, you represent more than just yourself. That's the nature of our profession. You're "Jose's" teacher. So when you're in our community, you have the responsibility to live up to high ethical standards. I think most people in this profession recognize that, but this was a place to support that even more and to talk about it.

Curriculum Director Rachel offered a unique perspective on how this objective was approached. She shared that even if it was no longer intentionally presented as some sort of session or activity about ethics (which she said it had been during the program's first year), TLDP provided a forum for discussing issues such as culturally responsive communication. Here, Rachel stated:



I don't think this one really comes through the program except when they're learning more about themselves as learners and how to communicate with other people. That is a really big piece...you kind of learn how to communicate...even when you have the different ethnicities of populations, so that predominantly, we're in this quadrant up here because we're North American and White/European descent. But if we have a parent that comes in that is from [another part of the world]...It's part of their communication style....So we need to kind of have a way of thinking about "How do we communicate?" [Perhaps] these people don't respect the way you may be communicating with them because it seems like you're not being honest. And so we have discussed that we have to be aware of that. That's kind of discussed in the [TLDP] project, too. To me, knowing all that stuff kind of overlaps here with the ethical principles and the code of ethics.

Finally, Curriculum Director Elizabeth shared that while they do not explicitly say, "Hey! We're having an ethics lesson," TLDP session leaders do address this objective through more subtle ways, stating:

I think that is probably the most nebulous one. We talked about how leaders are professional. One of the things I talk about in my sessions is team work. The tendency we have sometimes to use the term, "family," for the groups we work in, how debilitating that is because when you refer to your family—"your high school family" or "your social studies family"—you don't know what kind of reference that holds for some people. Because your family experience may be all roses and sunshine, but other people's family reference might be very different, very dark.... So we talked about, so instead of saying, "family," which is debilitating to some people, we use the word, "team," which is about work, and getting things done, and producing a goal together....There are a lot of things we talk about in terms of ethics, in terms of seeing things from the other points of view, which is another ethics dilemma. Sometimes, politically correct...can be debilitating, because you don't address an issue. So you know, don't just gloss over something. Be kind, but be direct.

And so while the fourth objective, ethics, was perhaps less intentionally woven throughout TLDP, district leaders shared several examples of how this did come through the program. Moreover, as the data presented in Chapter Five will demonstrate, teachers were similarly unclear as to how this objective had manifested through their leadership development experience.

### **District Leaders' Perceived Successes and Critiques of TLDP**

In this final section, I will present the ways in which district leaders described what it meant to them for a teacher to have successfully completed TLDP. This will be followed by three specific critiques that district leaders communicated about the nature of this program, which were the limited role of principals in TLDP, difficulty with supporting teachers post-participation in the program, and perceived challenges with the nature of their participant pool and recruitment.

**Defining successful completion of TLDP.** When asked to define a teacher as having successfully completing TLDP, district leaders focused heavily on their perceptions of how teachers learned about the change process and the challenges of implementing changes across a district. For example, Assistant Superintendent Beverly described her experiences as she walked around the room during a session as teachers were engaged in the “change game,” stating:

As I was walking around, two of the most telling things this year, this one group first looked up at me and said, “Oh, so now we see. This is what you are doing at central office, and this is why it takes so much time to change to [a new math curriculum], or why it takes so much time to get

to standards-based report cards! We never realized how many conversations [you need to have] and how important it is to talk to people!” Which, you know, that’s our work. I think back, and I think it took us a year to make that shift to [the new math curriculum]. But, we had to talk to the community. We had to talk to the School Board. You know, those things. And the other piece that I thought was so powerful was this one participant looked up and said, “We need the penguin book!” Because that whole book (Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005) had been about those penguins...trying to figure out how they’re going to survive, and who emerged as a leader, and how they got together, you know, to not die! And so it was just very telling to me. It indicated to me that they really were processing and they really were getting all those sessions before. Because that’s what we were working toward when we got to that change game.... I really can’t quantify that, but it was very powerful to know it really did stick, they really did process it, and they really are drawing on what they’ve learned to play this game today.

When I asked Superintendent Dr. Arnold to reflect specifically on what it meant for teachers to have successfully completed TLDP, she suggested that I read the end-of-program reflections which had been submitted to her over the four years of this program’s existence (an analysis of which is included in Chapter Five). When I inquired further about any indications Dr. Arnold had that this program had been a success, she then referenced the formal program evaluation they had completed of TLDP. Here, Dr. Arnold read to me an anonymous quote that she had also shared at a national conference, asserting:

Here is what one principal said that summed it all up...this sort of captures the principal’s view: “I think [TLDP] is one of the best things I’ve seen implemented in the school system in a long time....It achieves so many things. It increases collaboration and networking among our strongest teachers in the district. It reinvigorates and re-energizes teachers in this age when they feel burdened down by accountability. It

fosters a sense of teacher empowerment. It clearly increases the leadership capacity of our faculty. It capitalizes on the greatest assets in the school district: our human resources....” I can go on and on....In some ways, I’m not sure you can put a price on it or a measure on it.

When asked to define what it meant to have successfully completed TLDP, Curriculum Director Rachel shared a different sort of perspective. She instead discussed her perceptions of the varying degrees to which teachers had demonstrated success on TLDP’s project component, namely by them promoting school improvement and exhibiting follow-through on their project’s objectives:

In my mind, successful completion is not just attending the sessions and participating and doing the project. Because, we’ve had one project that was far better than others. I mean we had one: it started out there were three people at the school who were going to do an after-school reading club. But they couldn’t get the participation, so they ended up doing it in the break before school. So, there were three teachers helping one student read for several days. That was an example of a project that, in my opinion, did not do anything. These should be things that help move the school forward. They should be sustainable and these things should help, should be aligned to, a goal and things that you’re working on....But we have had some that did some work and pushed forward. One I liked last year was...a PBL-focus with critical learning. And they did a club as well, but they involved more teachers in the school. And they had the kids coming in and they were learning about problem-based learning. And they were also part of [an arts-based] initiative and the kids designed an outdoor learning center for which they got donations and built a stage ....[There is] a plan to sustain and grow each year. Even though for that project, those people aren’t always going to be there, it’s something that is going to benefit the school, all the kids got involved....They brought people from the community and talked to kids about designs, and tied it into the critical thinking aspect, and really tried to help kids with a rubric. So it was to help the kids but also to help the school, and something that I think would sustain. We’ve had several similar to that....But there were

also some where they were just like, “I’ve got to get something done and just turn something in.”

As discussed in the *presentation of TLDP*, district leaders also viewed successful completion of TLDP in terms of how several former participants had been hired into formal teacher leadership roles, some initiatives adopted by the district had originated as TLDP projects, and “TLDP graduates” had taken a central role in their district’s implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Along these lines, I went “a bit off script” and asked Superintendent Dr. Arnold if she viewed her implementation of TLDP as something that was more so replicating an existing version of their district’s culture if the program had the effect of changing their district’s culture in some way. She responded:

I hope some of both. That’s a great question! You know, we have our core values: respect; integrity; collaboration; student-centered; students first; continuous improvement; high expectations for all. That’s what we stand for as a district. And so, I’m sure—I hope—those things permeate the sessions. I also hope that the culture shifts to be even more collaborative. I mean, we didn’t have that nailed at the time we started this. We did not have high performing PLC’s when we started [TLDP]. They’ve improved tremendously! So yes, it definitely has moved that work forward of, “What is the role of a PLC? How do we accomplish that role? How do we work as a team?” That is now part of the culture. It was spotty and maybe not existing at all in some places. It is now expected and sustainable. When you think about “the three I’s: initiate, implement, and institutionalize,” we’re getting close to “institutionalize” with PLC’S.

I will now present interview data which indicated several critiques that the various district-level leaders also shared about TLDP.

**District leaders' critiques of TLDP.** While some examples of district leaders' critiques about TLDP have already been indicated throughout these findings (e.g., differing levels of performance on the project; less than intentional treatment of the "ethics" goal through program sessions, etc.), there were also three, more specific critiques that they shared about the nature of the program and its participants. These themes included district administrators' perceptions about the limited role of principals in TLDP, challenges with post-program support for TLDP participants, and challenges with the participant pool and recruitment.

***Principals' limited roles in TLDP.*** During our interviews, district leaders made some mentions of the role that principals played in TLDP and their district leadership structure. For example, Superintendent Dr. Arnold discussed principals' responses to the district's evaluation of TLDP (included above) and also described how principals were tasked with nominating applicants for the program, providing approval and support for participants' projects, and reviewing with their teachers the results of the school climate survey. Curriculum Director Rachel made brief mention of how she chose two of their principals to help lead the "poverty session" based on their personal and professional backgrounds. Assistant Superintendent Beverly also mentioned how one principal had originally worked with her to model the roll-out of collaborative PLC work through the first year of TLDP. However, another theme that arose was a

perception that principals played too small a role in implementing TLDP. Explicating this, Curriculum Director Rachel discussed her views around how principals' participation was limited to the sessions where some of them may have been asked to present:

I will tell you one thing that would improve [TLDP] is that [administrators] are not there for the sessions....So, there is kind of a disconnect. [Teachers] are out there, and they're learning about poverty, and they're learning about this teacher change. And we have had so much change within the district with administrators. Most of the administrators we have now...were not there back when we did that Marzano background [professional development on magnitudes of change]. So now these teacher leaders have a different level of knowledge than the administrators. And so there's kind of a disconnect when they're coming together and talking about the projects and so forth. I think it would be better if the administrators and the teacher leaders could have gone through it together. The [administrators] who present really only know their one session. And so out of the eight sessions, they're only coming to one. And that's not everybody...so it's really hard to go back and lead, and talk about some of this in your school, and keep it going systematically.

Curriculum Director Rachel further defined this challenge and provided a caveat for others who might institute their own teacher leadership development program:

I felt that administrators should have been cycled through. Maybe have a group that went through the first year and some the second year. Assign it out so that everybody, and *new* folks, can get acclimated and into [TLDP]. I think that before, [the challenge] was *time*. And it still *is* time. I mean it's hard. How do you miss eight days out of your school? Eight full days! It takes a lot of time out of the building, especially with the administrative leadership days we [also] have. So we had even talked about doing some condensed versions....Where it goes from here, I don't know. But we need to keep trying to find ideas for it, whether it's maybe

revamping our leadership team meetings so we've got *some* time set aside for some of these big ideas. But for me, if someone was going to replicate [TLDP], I think that's something that needs to be changed.

***Challenges with post-program support.*** Another theme that was echoed by more than one district leader was a perceived challenge they had with providing formal post-program support for TLDP participants. For example, Assistant Superintendent Beverly commented on how their district had been grappling with this challenge, and stated:

That's a piece we struggle with...how do you keep honoring, and how do you keep supporting and driving your [TLDP] graduates? And we've played around with a lot of things. We've thought about having a symposium for them—of course, we don't have the money now. We thought about, could you send them all to a national conference each year? You know, what can we do for the graduates? And we...when we have to take everything into consideration...we've really just kind of come back to, "We think we have built their capacity to where, if they want to step in different types of roles, they're more prepared for them." As the administrators have grown and come to see more and more of what the academy is doing, we feel like at their schools they're being given more opportunities to do things. But that's a piece that we still wrestle with. It is a need.

Superintendent Dr. Arnold also commented on this theme and described the one regret that she had about the nature of TLDP, stating:

I wish we could be doing more follow-up and ongoing support for those who have already come through the program. [What we might do] is up for discussion, but perhaps...many of them do serve on district committees...perhaps they could be on a taskforce to solve different problems. We thought about how maybe once a year, we could have a



guest speaker on a pertinent topic, much like a [regional professional development organization's] workshop, only shorter. We could do that and invite all past participants. We could have a dinner meeting with a special speaker and have a reunion. What we did do this year for the first time...was that on the day of the projects, we tapped the new cohort *before* they gave the projects, rather than in May, and we invited the new cohort members to come to the project presentations by the teachers from *their* school. We did not take them out all day, but [it was] to begin with the end in mind.

***Challenges with the participant pool.*** District leaders' third critique of TLDP

which emerged was that some of them perceived a less than positive shift in the overall tenor and make-up of successive TLDP cohorts, starting around the third year of the program. Leading towards her perceptions of how TLDP was truly designed to impact all teachers in their school system (echoed when Superintendent Dr. Arnold explained the recruitment process), Assistant Superintendent Beverly commented on the evolving nature of their participant pool through the history of TLDP, stating:

I think that the first couple of cohorts, we had sort of a combination of probably some of our strongest teachers and then we had some of our more challenging teachers—some of our naysayers, even. I think the principals intentionally picked a few of them who were [naysayers] and we were glad about that because, you know, that's the group you always want to move. So I think the first couple of the cohorts we had more, probably, of the teacher leaders and the stars that were already sort of out there in their schools, and usually the go to people, and that kind of thing. And then we had some naysayers mixed in there. And then I think the next two cohorts, it started sort of leveling out. We started seeing...more *novice* teachers in the cohort—because then again, we've had a lot of turnover. Everybody has, across the state. It's not just [in our district]. So I think we've seen some more younger and novice teachers mixed in with some veterans. So it's been a nice combination. And it's kind of leveled out, if you will, the last year or so. And I think that's

pretty true for this year, too. We sort of got past that first little wave and I think that's what's been so powerful (i.e., TLDP has been there for "...all teachers....")

When I asked Curriculum Director Rachel to share why she believed the first couple of cohorts may have found TLDP worth participating in, she also shared some thoughts on the evolving nature of their program's participants:

There were more applicants kind of at the beginning. It's dwindled some. I think, in part...we've gotten through—I don't know how politically correct this is—I think that a lot of those people who rise to the top have already gone through [TLDP]. I even heard some principals saying they were having a tough time getting people to apply....Last year (4<sup>th</sup> cohort), it was an interesting group. We were starting to see that, but still it was a good group. This year's group (5<sup>th</sup> cohort), we have a split. And I tallied: when they came to the very first meeting and they talked about their experiences and so forth, we had 26 in the room and 13 were BT's (beginning teachers) with less than three years' experience and 13 were not. I was just tallying and thought, "We'd never had so many BT's!" It's not that we don't want teacher leaders without the experience, but a lot of them were just one year!

When I followed up on this theme with Curriculum Director Rachel, she provided some insights about why applications for TLDP were perhaps decreasing, stating:

Originally, [participants were] people that were highly motivated because they wanted to be in a leadership role. The first year they did not know that they were getting a stipend. It was truly, "I'm interested in being a teacher leader. I want to learn some more about leadership." I think some word of mouth [perpetuated the program]. I think people liked it that were there. The project, I think, scared off some people. But overall, I don't know, I suspect that for some people, it is just extra work.

Related to the critiques mentioned above, I perceived through the interview process that district administrators were quite forthcoming with these responses. Similarly, it appeared that they each shared both a sense of how they intended to work on these issues as well as how my knowing of these issues could improve the quality of this case study—and in turn, the work of others.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have described the nature of how one school district in North Carolina sponsored a formal teacher leadership development program (TLDP) in response to the mandate that all teachers must demonstrate leadership. Furthermore, I have presented several themes that emerged from my interviews with district-level leaders that were central to my research questions and adopted conceptual framework. These themes included the diverse ways in which district leaders viewed the constructs of teacher leadership and distributed leadership, the ways in which they perceived the manifestation of TLDP's goals and objectives, how they defined teachers as having successfully completed TLDP, and three specific critiques that district administrators shared about TLDP. It was evident through these findings that district leaders were proactive in designing a program they believed would add to "the army of leaders" needed within their school system to tackle the challenges and changes in public education. Moreover, the school district often solicited feedback and reflected on the nature of this program. This led to some changes in the program's scope and sequence as well as in the ways they approached TLDP's required group project.

In Chapter Five, I will switch lenses and present findings about what teachers said they learned from their experiences in TLDP, how they viewed the nature of teacher leadership and professional development, and some specific highlights and critiques that they, too, shared about the program. I made the decision to include this teacher-focused data as an entirely separate chapter to further illuminate the essence of my adopted conceptual framework: *capacity-building as the intersection of distributed leadership and a constructivist view of teacher leadership development.*

CHAPTER V

CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING LENS:  
PRESENTATION OF TEACHER-FOCUSED DATA

In this chapter, I will present findings through a *constructivist lens of capacity building* in addressing the research questions that guided this case study. In this respect, I will focus less on the nature of TLDP and distributed leadership and *more* on three broad themes that relate to the constructivist learning lens of this study: (a) what and how teachers learned about leadership through TLDP; (b) how teachers' views on the nature of teacher leadership might have evolved through these professional development experiences; and (c) what teachers perceived as the nature of effective professional development and support from a school district.

The data presented in Chapter Five has been divided into three main sections. First, I will present findings from my analysis of four years' worth of end-of-program reflections that had been submitted by TLDP participants to their district. Second, I will present findings from the initial qualitative survey I conducted of TLDP participants during the summer in which they began the program. Third, I will present findings from the series of interviews I conducted with seven teachers who acted as key informants for this study. Moreover, tables that further display my coding and analysis of the

written reflections as well as presentation of participants' complete survey responses have each been included in Appendices G and H, respectively.

### **Presentation of Archived Written Reflection Analysis**

Part of my methodology involved the review and analysis of 79 archived reflections that were written by participants of TLDP across the program's four year history and archived by the district's superintendent. I have organized my complete analysis of these reflections through a series of six tables that are located in Appendix H. These tables were based on my thematic coding of participants' statements of their short-term career goals and what type of support they would like from the district, followed by responses to two out of four additional questions. These optional prompts asked participants to describe: ways in which they perceived they had grown through TLDP, what they had learned about "the change process," how they viewed their own influence in their professional situation and how that might have changed through TLDP, and how their educational philosophy might have changed over the course of the previous year. The 14 responses to "educational philosophy" were based on those participants retaking a Philosophy of Education© inventory published by Katzenmeyer & Moller (2009; p. 171).

It is also worth noting that there was an uneven distribution of responses across the four years of this program (*18 of 26* the 1<sup>st</sup> year; *15 of 26* the 2<sup>nd</sup> year; *24 of 25* the 3<sup>rd</sup> year; and *22 of 25* the 4<sup>th</sup> year). While it was apparent that the district had improved

its response rate after the second year of the program, I chose not to inquire into *why* this rate had increased as examining this appeared extraneous to this study.

### **Career Goals of TLDP Participants**

In total, 78 out of 79 TLDP participants reflected on what their career goals were and a portion of these responses included ways that they wanted the district to help support them in pursuit of these goals. A clear majority of the participants (57/78) expressed a desire to continue as a classroom teacher and in their current position. Of the 26 participants who expressed a desired to leave classroom teaching, 13 wished to pursue administration, six sought a formal lead teacher coaching position, and the rest discussed a move to either another type of teaching position or to leave the district and/or retire.

A significant finding from this data was also that a little over one-third of the participants discussed *graduate school* as an important factor in their professional growth. While 12 of these participants discussed a program in administration or educational leadership, another 16 discussed a desire to enroll in/complete a master's level program that focused on curriculum and instruction. In other words, about one in three TLDP participants wanted to complete a master's degree and half of those individuals clearly wanted to remain in a teaching/lead teacher role. I will further discuss implications of this finding in Chapter Six. However, in short, there seems to be a disconnect between North Carolina's State Legislative action that declared master's degrees as nonessential to the role of classroom teachers and what was a very common

goal of this group of aspiring teacher leaders from 2010-2014: to pursue graduate school and remain in the teaching profession.

Beyond pursuit of graduate school, participants reflected most often on their desire to: focus on professional development (whether their own or through mentoring and developing others); assume greater influence and responsibility as leaders in their school; and advocate for students, teachers, or specific programs/initiatives. Other responses mentioned National Board Certification, improving collegial relationships, and continuing on with the TLDP project or another similar initiative. A complete analysis of this question is located in Appendix G, Table i.

#### **Areas of Support Requested by TLDP Participants**

Separating 78 participants' goals statements from the 64 instances where they requested support did require some interpretation on my part. In most responses, discerning between the two was apparent, for example when participants used phrases such as, "I would like the district to....," or, "It would be helpful if my principal could...." However, there were five instances within my analysis when I inferred that statements of goals were also requests for support. Two of these instances involved TLDP participants implicitly promoting their own candidacies as future school administrators (i.e., this differed from times when a participant stated their goal and then asked the district to consider their candidacy). The other three instances were when participants advocated for a specific program tied to their area of teaching, which I interpreted as them also asking for support from the district for this program to continue.



In summary, I found that about one-third (26) of the participants expressed satisfaction with the program and/or praised the district. The next most common response-types were participants' desire for more areas to lead and have their goals supported (e.g., support for their project or National Board Certification), and desired support for specific initiatives and programs (e.g., supporting the gifted education program or additional media & technology resources). Three participants asked for some sort of follow-up initiative for those who had completed TLDP. It appeared that this particularly resonated with district leaders as a perceived lack of such support was the Superintendent Dr. Arnold's "...one regret..." regarding their implementation of TLDP. A complete listing of my analysis of TLDP participants' desired areas for support is located in Appendix G, Table ii.

#### **Areas of Growth Perceived by TLDP Participants**

In total, 60 out of 79 TLDP participants chose to respond about the ways in which they perceived they had grown as a result of their participation in TLDP. Within one-third (20) of these responses, participants stated they had become more self-aware and/or aware of how others might view them. This appeared to connect directly to TLDP's focus on *self-discovery* and *communication skills*. Other frequent response-types included participants' perceptions that they were better able to collaborate/problem-solve with colleagues, they gained *more self-confidence* and/or self-identification as a leader, and they were *stepping out of their comfort-zone* and felt more comfortable speaking up for their beliefs and/or trying new things. Others mentioned specific

elements of the program such as understanding change, becoming more reflective, and having a better understanding of teacher/shared leadership as areas in which they had grown.

I found it interesting that one participant mentioned in their reflection that they now viewed themselves more as “a professional” and “not just a teacher.” While this was only one response, this was reminiscent of Mehta’s (2013) explication of the *underprofessionalization* of teaching. A complete listing of my analysis of TLDP participants’ desired areas for support is located in Appendix G, Table iii.

### **What TLDP Participants Learned About Change**

There were 48 instances in which TLDP participants described what they had learned about the change process. I found that a majority of those participants made no mention of what role teacher leaders would play in this regard. Instead, they essentially just referenced elements of the “Iceberg” text (Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005) and/or what was learned in TLDP about the complexity and difficulty of change. A complete listing of this analysis is located in Appendix G, Table iv. However, there were also 18 instances in which TLDP participants described specific ways that teacher leaders can support the change process and/or changes at their individual school. Through a process of coding and comparison of themes across these 18 responses, I synthesized each of these into four (4) summary statements about the ways in which respondents perceived that teacher leaders can affect change:

1. Teacher leaders maintain a strong commitment to their role as leaders and to a school's continual improvement as they take risks where others might not want to do so.
2. Teacher leaders keep learning and stay informed about issues, they commit to their role as change-agents, they help others to stay informed about the specifics of change initiatives, and therefore they build their school's capacity to improve.
3. Teacher leaders remain intentional with change efforts, stay focused on needed changes, and help communicate a positive vision for change.
4. Teacher leaders act as a credible, knowledgeable cheerleader of sorts by maintaining a positive outlook for their colleagues and staying committed to the momentum of change initiatives in order to support those around them.

#### **TLDP Participants' Perceptions of Their Own Influence**

There were 45 instances in which TLDP participants chose to discuss their perceptions of how their influence as a leader had changed as a result of their participation in TLDP. In over half of these responses, participants discussed an increase in their perceived ability to share ideas, speak out, and collaborate with others as they enacted leadership and influence. Other participants stated that their professional influence grew due to their TLDP project or service on a specific committee.

Additionally, several of the participants discussed their influence in terms of setting a positive example, modeling best practices, and/or building stronger relationships with colleagues. No participants ever mentioned having to leave the classroom or pursue a different position and were each able to articulate ways in which they could exert greater influence in their current positions. A complete listing of this analysis is located in Appendix G, Table v.

## Changes in TLDP Participants' Educational Philosophy

One of the early activities performed by all TLDP participants was to complete the Philosophy of Education Inventory© found in Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009; pp. 171-182), which poses a series of Likert scale response questions aimed at characterizing respondents' beliefs and preferences related to the acts of educating students. Respondents' answers to this inventory result in scores for five (5) areas along a continuum of educational preferences, summarized below:

- *Behavioral*: preference for students' competence, behavioral change, and teachers ensuring compliance with a set of standards;
- *Comprehensive*: preference for a general, well-rounded education for life and on the teacher as the expert who delivers this education;
- *Progressive*: preference for students focusing on citizenship and problem-solving, and the teacher as a facilitator of their learning;
- *Humanistic*: preference for students' self-actualization and personal growth, and taking a more self-directed role in their learning;
- *Social Change*: preference for students focusing on transforming society, social justice, and being totally empowered as a voluntary learner

Centered upon this activity, TLDP participants were given the option in their end-of-program reflection to complete this inventory again and compare their results to what they had found during the summer in which they began TLDP (i.e., approximately one year earlier). In total, only 14 of 79 TLDP participants responded to this prompt over the four-year history of the program. A complete listing of this analysis is located in Appendix G, Table vi.

In addition to reporting on some of the specific changes within their Philosophy of Education© scores, TLDP participants also reflected in most cases on *why* they

believed such changes (or lack thereof) had occurred over the course of a school year. Five of the participants posited that their continued or higher likelihood to focus on more student-centered approaches to teaching and learning had bolstered their *humanistic* scores. Each of the seven participants who reported their highest or most increased scores as *progressive* commented on a renewed focus on problem-solving, seeing learning as less rigid and more student-centered, and/or posited that a new teaching position they had moved into during that school year had perhaps contributed to these views. One of these participants also equated a new preference for *progressive education* with TLDP's focus on promoting change. Similarly, the one participant who reported decreased scores in *behavioral* and *social change* preferences surmised that this change possibly resulted from a new professional focus on helping students set post-graduation/career goals.

### **Summary of Findings from Written Reflections**

Though it is reasonable to assert that many more conclusions could have been drawn from the archived documents that I reviewed, I found that the nature of how I had to *de-identify* this data limited these possibilities to an extent. Nonetheless, there were nine (9) clear findings that I identified through analysis of this data set. These findings were constructed from my observation of the frequencies with which various themes were present in, as well as some interpretation of, participants' responses across the four years' worth of reflections to which I was granted access by the district. I have listed a summary of these findings below:

1. A majority of TLDP participants (64/78) communicated their intent to remain in their roles as classroom teachers, whether that meant their same position or one in another grade-level, area of focus, or geographical location.
2. While lesser in frequency, a portion of TLDP participants (19/78) used this forum to promote their candidacy for other formal leadership positions such as school administrator or non-supervisory lead teacher/coach.
3. About one in three TLDP participants (i.e., 28/79) forecasted plans to attend graduate school in the years following TLDP.
4. There were 104 instances where TLDP participants viewed their growth through the program and influence at school in terms of increased confidence and/or comfort with acts of leadership, and/or with an enhanced capacity to better understand/collaborate with their colleagues.
5. There were 57 instances where TLDP participants reported a desire to enact greater spheres of leadership and influence in their schools, in the district, and even at the state level, post-participation in TLDP.
6. When asked about ways the district could support TLDP participants' professional goals, 31 of their responses centered upon a desire for the district/principal to provide more opportunities where teachers could lead, to support their professional goals, or to provide support for specific programs and/or initiatives about which they stated to have an interest or passion.
7. Each of the 18 TLDP participants who reflected on the manner in which teacher leaders can affect change did so in *positive terms*. These views centered upon themes of knowledge/credibility, positivity/communicating a positive vision, support for colleagues, staying well informed, and a commitment to their roles as change agents in the pursuit of school improvement.
8. There were eight TLDP participants out of the 14 that reflected on educational philosophy who reported a morphing of sorts toward a more *progressive* or *humanistic* philosophy of education. These participants posited that this change could be tied to their increased focus on student-centered learning/student-advocacy within their classroom settings.

9. Though small in scope in terms of frequency of responses, six of the TLDP participants wrote about their desire for district leaders to either be more sensitive to the demands of the teaching profession as they distributed responsibilities into the schools, or for district leaders to advocate for better compensation/working conditions for teachers with stakeholders beyond the district level.

### **Presentation of TLDP Survey Findings**

In this section, I will summarize findings from the qualitative survey I conducted of TLDP participants who were about to begin the program in July 2013. Of the 26 teachers who comprised TLDP's fourth cohort, 13 teachers completed the entire survey and three answered only the multiple-choice questions. These three teachers included one person who later participated as a key informant and two others who did not wish to do so. A copy of the survey protocol that I used is included in Appendix F.

#### **Why Respondents Chose TLDP**

For the first part of the survey, respondents were asked a series of demographic questions about their teaching assignment and total years of experience. A listing of these demographics was the basis for Table 2, "Summary of Teacher Leader Participants," included in Chapter Three. Respondents were then asked to select any of several choices I had provided to indicate *why* they had first applied for TLDP. A summary of these responses is listed in Appendix H, Table vii. A majority of the responses indicated that these participants had applied due to word of mouth (n=7) or to become a more active teacher leader in their school (n=8). Seven participants selected that they eventually wanted to serve as a school administrator (n=4) or were

seeking career advancement as a teacher leader (n=3). Three participants also selected that they needed a new challenge in their career. No participants selected the choices stating that their “administrator and/or mentor told [them] to apply” or that they were “in need of renewal credits.” However two participants selected that they wanted to “learn more about the meaning of teacher leadership” and one selected that they “wanted to improve [their] performance on the NC Teacher Evaluation Process.”

After the multiple-choice selections, respondents were asked a series of three short-answer response questions. In Appendix H, Table xiii, I have listed each of the 13 responses provided to the prompt, *“Please explain more about why it was that you wanted to participate in TLDP.”* It was apparent from these responses that some teachers originally viewed TLDP as a way to explore more of a school administrator’s perspective of leadership. This theme indicated some inconsistencies between teachers’ expectations and the vision and intended purposes for TLDP as they were described to me by district leaders. This finding also appeared similar to Bradley-Levine’s (2011) findings mentioned in Chapter Two, whereby most key informants chose to pursue a master’s degree in teacher leadership to bolster a career move into administration. However, responses to this prompt also indicated that these teachers chose to participate in TLDP as a means to develop better communication/collaboration skills, to self-reflect, to address professional weaknesses, to establish themselves as leaders within their school, and to make greater impacts on their students.



## **Respondents' Career Goals and How TLDP Might Help**

After elaborating on why they applied for TLDP, respondents were asked to briefly describe their career goals and how they believed TLDP might help in their pursuit of these goals. While this data ended up being a bit redundant when compared to my analysis of the archived written reflections, it was interesting to have captured such responses *before* they had completed TLDP whereas the written reflections were crafted *post-completion* of the program. A complete listing of participants' responses to this prompt are listed in Appendix H, Table ix.

What I found was that for some participants, their career goals remained unchanged upon their completion of TLDP. However, for at least two of these respondents who later served as key informants in this study, their initial desire to become an administrator was tempered some by their participation in TLDP. For example, in HS Elective Teacher Linda's second round interview, she discussed a sense of frustration at the lack of respect teachers receive in the profession and that she was considering a move outside of teaching into communications or public relations. Additionally, Curriculum Facilitator Melissa's experiences over the course of her year in TLDP caused her to hold off for some time on her pursuit of a school administrator career. In our second round interview, she elaborately discussed her aspirations to enroll in a Teacher Education PhD program and/or to continue her focus on developing professional development modules for teachers and helping to build instructional capacity in others.

### **How Respondents Intended to Enact Leadership**

Next, teachers were asked the question, “What are the ways in which you intend to fulfill the goals of TLDP?” A majority of these responses indicated that teachers had given some thought to the ways they had hoped to be successful through the program. Some teachers mentioned the notion of inspiring and setting an example for others. Others shared how they had entered into the program with some preconceived notions about what their team’s project was going to be. Interestingly, Curriculum Facilitator Melissa also later explained to me during our second-round interview that while she began TLDP with a vision for what their project was going to be, her colleagues ended up convincing her to go in a different direction and she was ultimately very pleased and inspired by their results. Teachers’ complete responses to this question are presented in Appendix H, Table x.

### **Summary of Survey Findings**

In summary, this initial survey provided a baseline examination of sorts of why teachers chose to participate in TLDP, what they aspired to accomplish with their careers, and how they envisioned TLDP might aid the pursuit of their goals. Overall, findings from this survey indicated that respondents had diverse reasons for wanting to participate in TLDP. It was evident that to some respondents, TLDP appeared to be a way to support their pursuit of a school administration role or some other advancement in their career. However, it was also evident that some of the respondents had no desire to leave the classroom, yet still thought that a program such as TLDP would

provide them with inspiration as well as knowledge of the ways in which teachers can impact their students, school, and district as a leader. Moreover, while findings from this survey were limited, it was also an important step in my process to recruit key informants into this case study. I will now present data from my interviews with these key informants.

### **Presentation of Teacher Interview Data**

In this section, I will present data from my interviews with seven participants of TLDP's who acted as *key informants* for this case study. Each of these teachers participated in interviews with me before and after their completion of TLDP's fourth cohort, which spanned the 2013-2014 school year. This data has been organized thematically to address various aspects of what key informants shared regarding:

- Their perceptions of their roles as teacher leaders, including how this might have changed through the program;
- Their perceptions of the most impactful elements of TLDP and several critiques that they shared; and
- Their perceptions of how school districts might, in general, effectively support teachers' professional development.

### **How Perceptions about Teacher Leadership Developed**

An intentional part of my methodology was to examine the nature of how teachers' definitions of *teacher leadership* changed/developed through their completion of TLDP. I approached this comparative inquiry by asking participants to define what they believed teacher leadership meant during both rounds of interviews and also by

asking them during the second-round interview to speak about how they believed this might have changed for them over the previous year.

**Pre-TLDP perceptions of teacher leadership.** During our first-round interviews, I asked key informants some contextual questions about their professional backgrounds and how they viewed leadership, in general. Next, I honed in on how they might define teacher leadership. In Table 5, below, I have presented what each participant said at that time about how they defined *the characteristics of teacher leaders*:

Table 5. Teachers’ Definitions of Teacher Leadership: Pre-TLDP Completion.

Teacher	Their definition of teacher leaders (TL), pre-TLDP
EC Teacher Brenda	I want to believe that of all of the leaders, the [TL’s] are someone who says that, at the end of the day, “Did we do what was best for the children today?”... I think that [TL’s] need to step up and take initiative—when we have new teachers in the school, or when we have someone going through a time where they need help with something.
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher Debra	I think [TL’s will be] a good mentor to new staff members, [they exhibit] honesty and work with a variety of people to always have students first in mind.... [A non-example would be] someone who is very effective with their students but that does not collaborate with their team and in their school. You can know what your school’s improvement plan and goals are and not make that an active part of what you do for your entire school. Maybe exhibiting that in the classroom but not within the whole school.
ESL Teacher Hannah	Effective [TL’s] are effective communicators. They sort of have this ability to be active listeners. And before jumping into an opinion, they might restate what they heard.
HS Elective Teacher Linda	[TL’s have] the ability to motivate, the ability to engage not just students. Somebody who is a good [TL] in a classroom should also be a [TL] among peers; [also] someone that is innovative, has vision, takes charge, but also knows when to step back.
Curriculum Facilitator Melissa	I think [TL means] a willingness to share knowledge, the ability to inspire others, influence others, and someone who has the respect of

	their peers.
Media Specialist Nancy	I once had a lot of passion for what I did and the people who had come from [TLDP], it seems like their passion has been reignited for whatever they do. I believe [TL's] want to help other teachers. The ones I know who are among the best, that's what they do.
Tech Facilitator Thomas	A [TL] has to straddle both sides of the fence, in a manner of speaking. They have to be with the teachers in the classrooms and also with the administrators. So I think they serve as a good bridge to bring people along to affect the best change in the school. And I've seen through participants in [TLDP] that I know, I have seen the change in their attitude towards school; in their behavior. I have seen a difference in the deliberative process [whereby] they're more involved in the decision-making in the school.

Summarizing the data above, it appeared that during the summer before they completed TLDP, these participants perceived that teacher leaders:

- Focus their work and decision-making on a *student-first* mindset;
- Motivate, assist, and mentor other teachers in their school;
- Effectively listen and communicate with others;
- Collaborate with, and command the respect of, their colleagues;
- Act as a *go-between* among administrators and teachers to affect change; and
- Display active engagement in decision-making at school.

**Post-TLDP perceptions of teacher leadership.** Without any prompting of participants about what they had said the previous summer, I began our post-TLDP interview by asking them, “*What does teacher leadership mean to you?*” I have presented each participant’s response in Table 6, on the next page:

Table 6. Teachers' Definitions of Teacher Leadership: Post-TLDP Completion.

Teacher	Their definition of teacher leadership, post-TLDP
EC Teacher Brenda	[It] is teaching by example, leading by example....I think leading or teacher leadership is being an expert in an area that you can lead others who are weak in that area.... I think that they need to not be afraid to say, "This is the thing I do well and maybe you could use this in the classroom." ...A teachers' role is to realize if there is a need, to go and try to help. Don't sit on your gold!
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher Debra	[It] is the ability to look at things—aspects of teaching—with different perspectives, and understand how other people deal with situations and guide decisions as to what is best for the students.
ESL Teacher Hannah	I think [it] means that you use all the skills and talents you have that benefits students and figure out a way to get that out of other people, whether that be students, or colleagues, or politicians, or just somebody in the community that you can draw upon and say, "Hey, you're really good at that! Can you come and help us figure out how we can do that in our school?" So I think it's a role that a teacher takes on where they just do a bit more in a way that it doesn't feel like more work.
HS Elective Teacher Linda	There's such a time of changing reform, changing administration—it doesn't seem that administration stays as long as maybe it used to—that it's really important to nurture teachers, or be willing to mentor new teachers who come in new to the system, new to the school, or straight out of college. So to me, teacher leadership is leading in your classroom, leading amongst your peers, and leading in your community, and as well as globally. It's important to remember that education has changed quite a bit and continues to do so in our country, and it's important to have a voice and to try to lead. It's a willingness, I think.
Curriculum FacilitatorMelissa	[It] means to me a willingness to constantly learn more, and from a willingness to share that knowledge, to learning from others, and to also to be willing to step out and share your knowledge and, you know, to constantly help other teachers learn.... [They] have success in the classroom. Other people respect them.... You can approach them if you have a problem. They're kind of a leader on their grade level. Other people know that if they're in trouble, they feel comfortable with that person because they are not a know-it-all. It's like street-cred, I guess.... They can walk the walk, they're not just talking the talk.
Media Specialist Nancy	[They] take on a leadership role by serving in their school. And I think I knew that last year, but I withdrew myself personally from some of those opportunities to serve.

Tech Facilitator Thomas	I believe [it] means identifying problems in the school setting, working with others to come up with the best solution, implementing those solutions, and seeing if the desired outcome is being reached; and if not, go back and try something different.
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It was therefore evident that, post-TLDP, these participants continued to define teacher leadership in terms of *mentorship, expertise and credibility, collaboration, and active engagement in school*. However, it also appeared that several of the participants now referenced specific themes embedded in the program, such as *coalescing diverse perspectives, involving all stakeholders, and identifying and solving problems*.

Summarizing the themes that were present among their post-TLDP statements, it appeared that key informants viewed teacher leaders as individuals who:

- Lead others by example, exhibiting expertise and credibility;
- Address their school's needs and enact viable solutions to these problems;
- Determine whether or not solutions are working and try something different if their approaches are not effective;
- Use all of their possible talents and galvanize all available resources in taking approaches that will benefit their students;
- Consider differing perspectives—including school, district, and global—and coalesce around shared decision-making;
- Provide stability and support for other teachers in times of change and reform;
- Engage in continual learning and facilitate the learning of other teachers; and
- Actively engage in various opportunities to serve the school and lead.

**Teachers' self-perceptions of their development.** Beyond the varied definitions each participant provided across two rounds of interviews, there were also varied ways in which key informants perceived their view on teacher leadership had changed over the previous year. For example, Media Specialist Nancy believed that TLDP had helped

her to reassess the influence she had upon her school prior to completing the program, explaining:

I think that I was doing a better job than I thought I was doing in my school. I was measuring myself with an old yardstick. When I first came into librarianship, that was 27 years ago now, and now we have all these technologies; we have one-to-one classrooms. I don't see the kids as much but I do more to support teachers more so than I'm working with students. And by directly supporting them, [I'm] helping teachers with research as they plan their lessons and things....In the past, I would have been having classes all the time where [students] would've been coming to the media center to do research and now they're doing more in the classroom. So I go into the classroom more [to support the students and teachers]...but this is a different world than it was 20 years ago.

Expanding on her description of how teacher leadership was primarily "leading by example," EC Teacher Brenda also explained that she had expected this construct would be discussed through TLDP "more in terms of practicing to be an assistant principal," but that the program turned out to be more about "...how I can be part of the same group of people, that we all have the same job description, but do it in a way that teachers look at me and say, 'That's what I want to be.'" EC Teacher Brenda further explicated her evolving views by sharing some misperceptions she believed people external to the teaching profession had about the distinction between school administrators and teachers as leaders. Here she stated:

People, especially who are outside of education, only know that in careers and businesses, they think that being the best is to be the boss. And they think the only way to climb the ladder in...business is to either own it or be the boss of it.... They look at the principal of the school as a



boss of the school....[Instead], the administrator is the one who works side by side with you to help you see what fits with the plans of the school.

Comparing her views before and after the program, it was apparent that HS Elective Teacher Linda had adopted a wider perspective of what teacher leadership entailed. This was indicated by how her first description of teacher leadership seemed focused on the context of one school or even one classroom, yet during our second interview she posited, “I think I’m embracing that more of being a leader in the community—in your local community as well as a global, more long-range community.” When I inquired about why her views might have changed, HS Elective Teacher Linda stated:

I think it was the whole process.... We learned about ourselves as well as just different issues that teachers deal with. [So it was] just maybe a chance to focus on those and bring them to light, and thinking about change, ultimately that change is hard for different people, and recognizing that. And being willing to try to rise above that and doing the best for the students, in the long run, is the bottom line. I think I’ve always known that, but I’m passionate about that now—for having a voice in that.

Prior to TLDP, 4th Grade Teacher Debra defined teacher leaders more in terms of mentorship, honesty, putting students first, and having a school-wide perspective in your work. However, post-TLDP, she appeared more focused on how teachers could lead by looking at their work through varied perspectives as they sought to make collective decisions about what was best for students. When I asked what it was about

the program that might have affected these views, 4th Grade Teacher Debra shared that the biggest change she saw in herself through TLDP was that she was "...able to understand better how different personalities perceive the same problem differently." She also stated, "I enjoy leadership a lot better than I did before. I am more apt to speak out when something comes to mind, or when there is a specific situation with what I feel particularly attached to." When I inquired as to why she believed the program had impacted her perspective in this way, 4th Grade Teacher Debra asserted:

Just because through [TLDP] you're put in different scenarios and see the processes of how many people have to come together in order for a change to be made to a district. And without people voicing their concerns or ideas, then nothing changes, and districts need change for the better. And if nobody is willing to speak or have an opinion about that, the district can't change. Even though you may feel that as a teacher your opinion may not matter, or if they choose to stay silent, then the district can't change.

Curriculum Facilitator Melissa shared that the extent to which her views on teacher leadership had developed over the previous year had changed not only due to TLDP, but perhaps stemmed more so from two concurrent career transitions that had taken place for her. One of these transitions was that she, along with Tech Facilitator Thomas, had recently been selected to a state-wide professional development organization that paid practicing teachers a sizable stipend to develop online curriculum and/or professional development modules. While both Tech Facilitator Thomas and Curriculum Facilitator Melissa acknowledged that their mention of having completed

TLDP probably bolstered their applications to this new initiative, Melissa believed her transition into an instructional facilitator role that school year had perhaps impacted her views on the nature of teacher leadership more significantly than TLDP had.

Referencing the heightened awareness of her personality-type she had gained through activities in TLDP as well as some challenges she had personally experienced with demonstrating leadership as a classroom teacher, Curriculum Facilitator Melissa, stated:

I think a teacher can very realistically be a leader in a PLC and be offering ideas up, but it can be extremely discouraging as a teacher if you are the only one doing that and you're not feeling like there's someone else who is nurturing you, too. I think it's hard. I think it depends, like on my personality type...I feel a need to do things as perfectly as I possibly can. So I feel like sometimes to ask teachers to do something, it depends on the level of the presenting. If you're standing up and sharing something in a staff meeting about something you did in a classroom, then I think it is completely manageable. But if you're asking them to present at a mini-conference while teaching their own class, I think it can be done but if it's someone like me, it would be extremely overwhelming because I want to do it perfectly in both arenas. Yes, it can be done. Some people, it doesn't stress them out. But somebody like me, I feel like I really enjoy the presenting but I wanted to focus on one or the other.

ESL Teacher Hannah's experiences related to this case study were very different from those of the other key informants as she dropped out of TLDP after only the third session. As ESL Teacher Hannah explained it, her decision stemmed from the mounting pressures and increased time commitments brought upon by the fact that the master of curriculum and instruction degree program that she was enrolled in had decided to accelerate their timeframe for completion by a full semester. This move was instituted

to allow students the opportunity to graduate *prior* to the NC General Assembly's looming deadline for phasing out masters-level pay for classroom teachers. What this acceleration meant was that ESL Teacher Hannah would have to complete a graduate-level leadership project, conduct research for/write her thesis paper, *and* tend to the extra demands of TLDP and its required project, all in the same semester. She consequently chose to let TLDP go. Moreover, a few days prior to our second-round interview, ESL Teacher Hannah had just accepted a position with a neighboring county for which she would leave the classroom and serve as a curriculum/technology coach at a high school. Therefore, ESL Teacher Hannah shared that her views on teacher leadership had evolved not through TLDP, but rather because of her "...own self-initiative." Moreover, ESL Teacher Hannah indicated that her acceptance of the new position was evidence that her views on teacher leadership must have evolved to an extent over the past year and she reflected:

[In my previous teaching position] I found myself sort of leading by default for people who were not yet either experienced in pedagogy, or who weren't experienced in the paperwork aspect of what we are doing, or how to navigate co-teaching relationships. So, I've always thought of myself as like a reluctant leader, because I don't like to really step out there in the front. But I found that I can be comfortable not stepping out in front, but just enveloping from the sides. So I just sort of imagine a picture of somebody giving a hug, and you've got a colleague here and a colleague here, and say, "Okay! Let's go!" and you sort of all go together. So I think that I have developed that leadership style that I may not have had before.

ESL Teacher Hannah also spoke about initiatives she engaged in outside of the confines of her school district that had largely impacted her views on teacher leadership. For example, she had become involved with several online teacher leadership forums, had been inspired by the book, “Teacherpreneurs,” (Berry, Byrd, & Wieder, 2013) and had recently been hired as an online blogger by an organization that is promoted through that book. Part of what she admired about Berry et al.’s thesis was its premise that teachers should be the highest paid people in the profession and should not have to leave the classroom to achieve this. Commenting on that premise, ESL Teacher Hannah described that in terms of her own aspirations in becoming an influential teacher leader:

Ideally, I would be able to straddle one foot in the classroom to stay grounded and one foot somewhere influential to help make sure that what happens here is the best for the people who are in here, whether they be students or, now, teachers. So maybe this weird middle ground is something to latch on to.

**Summary of developing views of teacher leadership.** In this section, data was presented that compared the ways in which key informants viewed teacher leadership before and after their completion of TLDP as well as described how they perceived their own views had changed over the course of the previous year. For several of these participants, they clearly believed that TLDP had impacted their views and even provided them with a source of inspiration or renewal for how they viewed, and now approached, their own leadership. For two of these key informants, they believed their

participation in TLDP perhaps spurred their acceptance into an initiative that was paying teachers stipends to develop professional development and curriculum modules to be used across North Carolina. For one unique participant, it turned out that she had dropped out of TLDP. However, as compared to the other six key informants, she was perhaps the one *most* engaged in diverse leadership development activities *outside* of the confines of the school district.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of TLDP**

I will now focus on what the key informants said were the most impactful elements of TLDP, how they believed these elements spurred their development as leaders, and several critiques that they also shared after their participation in this program.

**Most impactful elements of TLDP.** A consistent finding from my second-round interviews with teachers was that they each shared how some aspect of TLDP had positively impacted their professional development. Some of these key informants focused on their *group project* while others focused on one of the embedded themes of the program, such as *shared accountability for change, understanding poverty, or self-reflection*. Other participants spoke most positively about the general nature of TLDP, such as how district-level administrators were *active participants* as well as presenters, or how *networking* and *collaboration* were promoted through the program.

**Networking and collaboration.** Tech Facilitator Thomas appreciated the opportunity to work with others from around the district with whom he didn't normally

interact. Also, it was apparent to him that the district was promoting the “networking” aspects of TLDP by bringing back former participants to connect with the present cohort. Commenting on this, Tech Facilitator Thomas stated:

I thought it was pretty smart strategy to keep building this instead of: when you’re finished, you’re finished with [TLDP]...because sometimes in education it’s not like that. It’s, you get in a professional development or presentation or whatever on education, and then it’s over, and no one talks about it again, and no one follows up on it [asking], “How’s it going?” ...I appreciated that [TLDP] was building a network for the future.

Similarly, EC Teacher Brenda was impressed by the way in which former TLDP participants were asked to come back and present to their cohort. For instance, one former participant who had gone on to earn statewide distinctions as a teacher was leading a discussion on how role-playing scenarios helped her to overcome conflict and remedy difficult decisions. Describing an interaction she had with this teacher, EC Teacher Brenda reflected, “I was sitting at the front table. She came and role-played situations with me and when she would role-play, I could pick out in two seconds what went wrong [with the situation I had described].”

Media Specialist Nancy described how the general nature of team-work and collaboration throughout TLDP created what she sensed was an “...emotionally and mentally safe environment, where you feel like what you have to say matters, and *you* matter.” Describing this dynamic of the program, EC Teacher Brenda stated:

I learn best in an environment where I'm comfortable and they went through all lengths to make sure that everybody was comfortable. We just got to know each other and respecting each other's opinions; just having that climate of trust and mutual respect set up. I think that was their intention to get the groups to be cohesive and trusting each other.... If I feel threatened, I shut down. That's just my personality.

***Self-reflection.*** An element of TLDP that Curriculum Facilitator Melissa found had positively impacted her development were the opportunities for self-reflection and discovery that the program provided. Discussing this view, Melissa shared that:

The biggest thing I took away—and it affected me personally and professionally, and I found it so intriguing—was learning more about myself as a communicator and my personality style.... We really dug into who we really are as people, and what our drives are, and early childhood experiences, and reading and writing what strengths exist with that personality style; but also what weaknesses exist and reading about your opposite.... How my communication style might hinder me at times and how I might approach things differently when speaking to a person who is different from me. And so also understanding...that there is no perfect personality type, like when you work in any setting, it has to be shared leadership because you have to have all those strengths and weaknesses. No one person can fulfill that.

While reflecting on elements of the program, 4th Grade Teacher Debra discussed the positive impact it had upon her when she realized that her personality-type had changed somewhat since the last time she had completed this instrument several years earlier when she was completing her teacher education degree back in college. Moreover, Debra also realized that since her experiences in TLDP, “Going forward, I



think I'm a much better communicator with my team." Elaborating on this discovery, she stated:

I have always come back and told my team that "This is what happened in [School Improvement Team] today and this is what you need to know." I feel now how important it is to do the same thing and then say, "...and this is why it's important to you," and make sure that all teachers understand that yes, this is something you have to do, but this is why it's important. And I think that's something I was missing even. You know, maybe I never thought through the complete impact of every decision—and I think that I do now—and I think that if more people communicated that in their PLC's, then you would have stronger teachers in general.

Although her experiences in TLDP were brief, ESL Teacher Hannah shared that one positive impact she recalled it having upon her was that its focus on personality differences and teamwork led her to perceive "...some larger implications for the staff's development... for more cohesion and teamwork." Recalling how these activities early in TLDP had led her to advocate for change at her school, Hannah explained:

So I suggested to my administrator that "Next time you start putting co-teaching pairs together, you might want to look at these kinds of personalities and do that a little more intentionally—because that might help the working relationship—and do some of those personality icebreakers." ...That aspect of [TLDP] was helpful for working relationships and understanding the people I am working with.

Media Specialist Nancy believed that it was evident the experiences in TLDP had provided a boost of confidence and a sense of renewal. She attributed much of this to the opportunities the program afforded her to reflect on her 20+ year career.

Moreover, she shared that “...looking at my personality and not expecting to be somebody that I’m not,” was the experience in TLDP that meant the most to her. Recalling the nature of her reflection during the program, Media Specialist Nancy stated:

One thing I realized during the program was that I was not a very good team player because I was so quiet and I was just taking everything in. And then I needed to let my ideas out, I needed to form opinions, and I needed to be an active participant in whatever I was doing. Whatever group I was working with—the leadership team, the technology team, whatever team I was on—I needed to be more active in my participation. So I started doing that.

***District leaders’ participation.*** It was evident that district leaders’ roles as presenters and participants in the program had a positive impact on the way key informants perceived the nature of TLDP. Each of the six teachers who completed the program mentioned this theme in some way during our follow-up interviews. For example, HS Elective Teacher Linda commented on her perceptions of how TLDP was a product of their superintendent’s vision and how she had attended every session:

[Superintendent Dr. Arnold] was very involved. She participated. She didn’t just watch. She did lead as far as her participation and she did lead some sessions, but she was also at our tables and interacting with us, and I thought that was really important. And a lot of central office people were there.

Curriculum Facilitator Melissa shared her positive perspectives on the nature of how district leaders participated throughout the program. Reflecting on her views, Melissa stated:

They were sitting with you and hearing your perspective. So, growing more confident, feeling even more like a colleague with them instead of they're your superior. It was definitely great exposure *and* we had to get up and talk about our projects, there, in front of all those people.

Media Specialist Nancy was also positively impacted by the presence of Superintendent Dr. Arnold and other district leaders throughout the program. Explicating her perceptions of how district leaders *modeling continual learning* bolstered the quality of TLDP, Media Specialist Nancy stated:

Another thing that really helped was the superintendent and assistant superintendent being there.... And it helped especially when they would have an “*ah-ha*” moment after they’ve been through this four times already; just their presence there and seeing and hearing about their leadership styles—I mean we kind of know their styles, but their personality types and things like that—they would share that with the group. They participated in the group just like me. They were learning even after having gone through this.

***Shared accountability for change.*** Several of the participants cited TLDP’s focus on building a culture of shared accountability for change as one of the positive aspects of this program. For instance, HS Elective Teacher Linda described the elements of change discussed through the program and perceived that this topic probably also had a role in her development as a teacher leader, positing:

Maybe a long time ago I might have been scared of change, but once I realized that life is going to change no matter if we accept it or not, we need to do the best we can with it. But I think it's understanding that process, maybe. The change is so personal to people...and it's important for people to think about it and buy into that process.

4th Grade Teacher Debra discussed how that prior to TLDP, she was not aware of how much influence one person could have in expediting or stalling a change initiative. She also later saw some of this play out at school with the nature of their TLDP project. Along these lines, Debra commented that she could now "...see how one or two people who are not willing to make a change can make a drastic difference for the school itself. And I didn't realize how it affected the district itself."

Additionally, Curriculum Facilitator Melissa described how an aspect of promoting teacher leadership as shared accountability was that it forced districts, as well as teachers, to consider multiple points of view. Sharing her beliefs about the importance of developing teachers' sense of shared leadership, Melissa explained:

Your outcomes will be better with anything that you try to do because you're hearing from different perspectives and your goals; everything is being focused. It's stemming from real, real needs. And it's like a checks-and-balances kind of thing. I think...you're going to get great ideas if you involve everybody. Especially if you're making policies and you're not involving the people that are living it, then you're not going to see the weaknesses in it; whereas they can and can offer other insights.

***Understanding poverty.*** One key informant mentioned that she was enlightened by TLDP's focus on understanding the nature of poverty. Discussing these

views, HS Elective Teacher Linda drew a connection between this topic and the work she did as an advisor of a business-oriented competition team at her high school. Linda explained:

When we talked about poverty that really affected me a lot.... Last year was also my first year as [team] co-adviser.... And we do find that a lot of our students struggle with—since it is an expensive organization to be part of because of the competitions—they struggle to pay compared to other schools. And [poverty] also has effects on their prior experiences. When you're competing against students... [where] a majority of their parents are professionals, [socio-economically privileged students] hear conversations at home that our students never experience that...make it a challenge to get them up to the speed where they can truly be competitive on that level.

**Group project.** It was evident that key informants were proud of the work they did on their TLDP group projects. Some also found that the project was one of the most impactful elements of the program. Explaining the nature of her project, 4th Grade Teacher Debra could see how elements of “...the change game...” came to life when she and her teammate attempted to institute an intervention that assigned mentors to students who had demonstrated a propensity for exhibiting negative school behaviors and work ethic. She experienced some challenges with this intervention such as resistance from teachers and parents not following through with their ongoing communications with school. Reflecting on what she had learned, Debra asserted:

The project made me realize that it's important for everybody to be invested in something. I am more apt to be involved in that than I was before. I'm more apt to be more supportive and be more involved.... I

think I'm just more involved with the things that are going on in school, rather than just focused on my class.

During her project in which she and colleagues started a kind of robotics/bridge-building club, Media Specialist Nancy experienced a connection with TLDP's focus on improving teamwork that translated into a breakthrough for some students who had difficulty working with each other. Explaining this connection, Nancy recalled:

We even talked to [the students] about how [each club sponsor] had different personalities and we work together to make the club happen, even though we have completely different personalities. And we like different things. But we have one goal together. And they had to think about, "Oh! Even adults have different personalities and keep their personality aside to work with somebody."

Tech Facilitator Thomas and his teammates engaged in a project whereby they supported one of their school's improvement initiatives by orchestrating a literacy festival at an apartment complex which housed a high percentage of their students who were African-American. Through this project, Thomas found himself enacting a principle from TLDP of involving multiple stakeholders in an initiative. Here, he recollected:

We found a way for everyone to chip in: students who could do some work at the school; teachers who could do other things. I guess it's finding ways to empower other people, in a matter of speaking, to help them reach their potential.

Curriculum Facilitator Melissa began the program with an idea of developing a peer-tutoring program which paired up students across different grade levels. However, through recognizing a need “...to build relationships...” with her new colleagues at the school where she was now an instructional facilitator, Melissa agreed to their idea of building an outdoor learning environment. Ultimately, this was a project referenced by Curriculum Directors Rachel and Elizabeth as one of the most successful they had seen throughout TLDP (Rachel’s statements about this are included in Chapter Four). Moreover, Melissa conveyed how this experience reminded her of the importance of *action research*, something that she had studied in graduate school, explaining:

It’s super relevant to you and it’s meaningful, because you don’t listen to what someone else’s findings were. It’s your school, it’s your kids, [and] it’s your experience.... I think if teachers share, people are going to listen more because they teach at their school. With our kids, there is high poverty, high Hispanic, you know...all the same demographics, and you’re all doing it. So they trust that more so. It’s more credible because you can’t say, “Well, you don’t teach at my school,” or “We have different time constraints,” or whatever. So it makes it more valid and people are more willing to listen to that, I think.

**Teachers’ critiques of TLDP.** While a majority of what key informants shared about their experiences in TLDP was positive, there were also three themes that emerged regarding specific critiques that some key informants shared about the program. These critiques were that: (1) the amount of work and time away from their schools was difficult at times; (2) the nature of TLDP’s scope and sequence might be changed in some way; and (3) it was in some regards unclear as to what effect TLDP was

having on the leadership development of those who had completed this program or upon the school, in general.

***Significant time commitment.*** While this theme did not occur often throughout my interviews with key informants, one teacher's comments described her perceptions of how the significant time commitment TLDP required from its participants was at times difficult for some. In discussing what she viewed as the only essential critique she had about the program, 4th Grade Teacher Debra asserted:

I don't think there's a way to get around this, but it was 8 days. And in the scheme of 185 days [in a school year], eight days doesn't seem like a lot. But when you have other things thrown in—you know: professional development here, workshop there—it's a lot of time to be away from your class. And I was fortunate enough to have a great class last year and not have to worry about my children's behavior with subs [or] my sub's ability to control them. And I was very comfortable with my team being very willing to take over anything that needed to be done. But at the same time, you know [my TLDP teammate] did not have that classroom and there was a lot of pressure and tension being out of her class that long.

Moreover, 4th Grade Teacher Debra recognized the amount of work that district leaders and other teachers at her school had to put into making the program and group projects work. With a view that was somewhat reminiscent of Curriculum Director Rachel's critique that principals were not involved enough in TLDP, Debra stated, "It was a big investment from everybody involved. My administrator was only involved with it [to approve the project].... [But] I mean even our mentors [and] our teachers giving up their kids, it was a lot of work!"



***Proposed changes to TLDP.*** TLDP participants generally found that similar aspects of TLDP had positively impacted their development, including *change, self-reflection, the collaborative nature of the program, and the group project*. However, some key informants made suggestions for how the district could increase the quality of the program, including modeling strategic problem-solving and various resources, increasing the role of principals in the program, and more intentionally including an action research focus in the scope of the program.

***More intentional modeling.*** Tech Facilitator Thomas perceived that it would have been an improvement to TLDP if the district reduced the amount of time spent on the various aspects of personality and self-reflection and instead modeled the strategic problem-solving that was expected for the group project. Thomas articulated this view and posited:

For example, [strategic problem-solving] could have been done in a group where they said, “Here’s something that’s going on. What are some different ways we can tackle this problem? And then discuss these.” I mean, we didn’t have much training in that area. We talked about your personality, how to get along with other people, things like that. But I can’t remember us actually seeing [strategic problem-solving] done.

Along these lines, EC Teacher Brenda commented on her slight dissatisfaction with how, at times, presenters displayed lists of web-based resources but paid little attention to modeling for the teachers what those resources were. Communicating this perception, EC Teacher Brenda stated, “Let’s go to the website and show me what it is!”

*Increasing the role of the principal.* In expanding on her positive perceptions of how Superintendent Dr. Arnold and central office members actively participated in TLDP, HS Elective Teacher Linda echoed a critique broached by others in the study that school administrators had a limited role in TLDP, sharing:

I think it would have been nice for more administrators to be part of that from individual schools. There were some, and I know it would have been hard for them to be away, but I would like to have seen them be more involved in that.

*More focus on action-research.* One participant, Curriculum Facilitator Melissa, spoke at length during our interview about her passion for action research, the ways in which TLDP promoted an action-oriented approach to the group project, and how action research was crucial to a her new area of career advancement. Speaking to this area of interest, Melissa explicated her views on how the district might more intentionally frame the TLDP group project as “...action research,” stating:

That would be a really cool component to add in, even kind of a twist. Maybe when you do choose your project, you do action research and present your findings. That is a project, in a way.... I mean we did have data. We had to find some data. But I think it would have been nice to expose us to...the process of, “what is action research?” We didn’t talk about the different types of data, mixed methods, like getting into some of that...and also setting up some sort of research where you are going to collect the data and analyze.

Interestingly, Curriculum Facilitator Melissa's views were also reminiscent of the manner in which Curriculum Director Rachel discussed the group project, which she often referred to during our interview as "...the action research project...."

***Questioning the impact of TLDP.*** The final theme of critique present in key informants' interviews emerged from two participants who questioned whether TLDP was having lasting impacts upon its participants or the schools as a whole. In the first of these two critiques, HS Elective Teacher Linda expressed a skepticism shared by some of her colleagues--doubting whether TLDP had been having lasting effects upon the leadership of all those who completed the program—that led to her conducting some informal research for a graduate class she was taking. Explaining all of this, Linda shared the circumstances that led her to conducting a survey of approximately 20 former and current (4<sup>th</sup> cohort) participants of TLDP:

I've heard people say, "Those people from [TLDP]: are they really more of a leader now?" Last fall, I was taking my first graduate class [on research methods] to get my masters.... And so one of the things I did was survey some previous [TLDP] members. I would say probably it was a little more than 50% did feel like they had taken on more of a leadership role. But some did not. There were some who said that they were not recognized or that their principals or administrators didn't come to them and ask them to play a bigger role as a leader.

When I pressed further and inquired where HS Elective Teacher Linda fell on this debate, she expressed differing views including how teachers must take initiative to lead:

I think [principals] think [TLDP] is a great thing. I don't know that they really necessarily think of calling on [TLDP] members first. I think they have people that they always call on for professional development and to step up and do things. Some of those are [TLDP] people and some aren't. I don't know that they actually ask them because they were in [TLDP].... But I definitely think that you have a responsibility to step forward and take on more.

ESL Teacher Hannah suggested through her observations of past and present participants that TLDP participants needed to be more intentional in presenting their group projects to the school and not just at TLDP's final session. Although she mentioned that her views were also perhaps due to her not completing TLDP, Hannah revealed:

Had I not known who was in [TLDP] in my building because I started with them, I don't know that I would have been able to pick them out among the staff.... I wouldn't have seen any evidence of, "Oh, these guys are working on this project and it's part of [TLDP]." I didn't see evidence of it back at the site. Or the previous people, you know, other than when they come around with the balloons and say, "Hey, congratulations! You're in!" I would not have known previously who would have gone through this program.

When I asked ESL Teacher Hannah about what the program might do differently to remedy this critique, she expressed that it would have been helpful to make the school faculty more aware about the nature of the group project, positing:

If [participants] would come back and present [their projects] to us as the actual staff...I think that would be really beneficial and worthwhile, because then we would sort of all take ownership of it. If I knew what it was, then I could celebrate it with them. But as it stands, they presented

their project today—somewhere—and if I was not working on a team with people, I wouldn't even know what the project was. Well, the project was supposed to benefit our students and our school. Everybody should know about it!

**Summary of teachers' perceptions about TLDP.** In this section, various themes were presented about what key informants perceived as the most impactful elements of TLDP as well as various critiques and suggestions for improvement that they shared through their post-program interviews. In the next and final section, data will be presented about what key informants perceived were the most effective ways in which a school district, in general, can support the professional development of its teachers.

#### **Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Support from a District**

Key informants were each asked to describe how they viewed the ways in which a school district could effectively support the professional development (PD) of its teachers. During the second-round interviews I had to sometimes clarify for teachers that I meant "PD in general." It therefore appeared that the views expressed in this section were shared upon an overall context of leadership development but were also co-constructed through my prompting for key informants to envision what they saw as the most important ways a district could support the development of its teachers in any professional capacity. There were several themes that emerged from key informants' responses to this question, including: (1) making PD relevant to the teachers; (2) providing differentiated PD based on teachers' experience-levels, areas of needs, and

interests; and (3) creating/facilitating opportunities for teachers to network and collaborate.

**Make it relevant.** Several key informants views related to a theme of *making PD relevant for the teachers*. This theme was present in HS Elective Teacher Linda's response, for example, when she asserted:

I do think it is the responsibility of the district to make sure they nurture leaders, nurture teacher leaders, and nurture their position within each school, and recognize that they have a lot to give to the overall community, the feel of the school, everything about it (later clarified to have meant "school culture"). I do think it's important. I think providing professional development opportunities that are relevant, that are what teachers are looking for, and listening to them. I think listening to your teachers is a role that the district and administration, the district as a whole, needs to do. Make sure they are very aware of what teachers want and what they are looking for, as opposed to what they think. [is the case].

Tech Facilitator Thomas shared similar views and added his preference that participants receive follow-up to determine whether a particular PD experience was effective, stating:

I think [PD] should be relevant. I think it should be important. Maybe those are synonyms, but in my mind they're not. I think the participants should see the benefit to themselves—and to their students as well—of the educational and professional development. And It should be something that there's a follow-up where you come back and say, "Okay, is it working? Is it not?" A reflection piece, not just left alone. Like, I assume our [TLDP] cohort will be asked to come and participate in the future, along with future cohorts, to keep it going.

When asked about the nature of effective PD, Curriculum Facilitator Melissa again stated her interest in action research. In this instance she articulated how such an approach could be modified and integrated with teachers' ongoing practice to ensure that what they learned was relevant to their students' and colleagues' needs. Here, Curriculum Facilitator Melissa said:

I think that the coolest thing a school district can do is let the teacher do their own action research and present their findings. Like make it [part of] your PGP (professional growth plan).... Not to make it too heavy—it doesn't have to be overwhelming—but a lot of teachers are...naturally doing an action research approach. But maybe you don't have the forethought to think about data collection or how you're going to analyze data and come to your findings in, like, a concrete way.... But I feel like that would be so cool if everyone could do their own action research based on a need they have in their own classroom—how they want to grow as a teacher—and then implement it. And at their year-end conference, or whatever, they can present those findings or then share it with the staff. And maybe you can't listen to what everybody's findings are.... You could go and listen to ones you might be interested in.

Finally, Media Specialist Nancy echoed the theme of *relevance* when she discussed her preferences and asserted that districts should be "...finding out first what the teachers' needs are." Moreover, in describing her satisfaction with the way her district approached PD for its teachers, Nancy contended, "I think they are doing more meaningful things now that teachers can really take back and use.... So giving the teachers something that is useful and meaningful [is important]."

**Differentiated PD and support.** The second theme that emerged from this question was that some key informants voiced a desire for *different elements of support*

*based on their experience-level, needs, and interests.* In one such response, EC Teacher Brenda expressed her preferences for how a school district might differentiate its approach to PD by taking time to explore multiple possibilities for its teachers, stating:

Let's sit down for two hours in the afternoon and look for different ways to find grant money or different places to find an investor who would pay for that. Let's spend some time looking at staff development and how you can identify what your weakness is and how you can go online and find ways to help that.

ESL Teacher Hannah spoke at length about her belief that PD needed to be enacted in a way that supports teachers beyond the initial stages of their careers. She also expressed that this would be more effective if teacher leaders and school administrators, not district-level personnel, played a more central role in orchestrating such support:

I think districts need to look at the different needs of their people and figure out a way to know what those are for your people. So really, I think it needs to become site-based, because I mean, who's going to know their staff better than their administrator or people on their team? I mean it really just needs to be small.... Somebody [at my current or former central offices] doesn't necessarily know what the people in those buildings need because they're not there on a daily basis.... [However], that's sort of predicated on the idea that teachers are going to be forthcoming about what they need. But hopefully we're all professionals and we're going to say, "We like technology but we're not comfortable giving the reigns over to kids with laptops." Then that teacher needs something, maybe guidance, maybe some modeling of what that can look like before they are comfortable just letting them loose. But that teacher's needs are completely different from somebody comfortable with Google Docs, and using this project and that project.



A similar aspect of differentiated PD was discussed by Media Specialist Nancy when she explained her perceptions of how the NCPTS and evaluation process, if done right, provided an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own needs and plan ways to grow as professionals. Here, Nancy recollected her year-end evaluation conference and discussed the value she found in conferencing with a trusted administrator:

If people look at it the right way through our evaluation system...the growth plans, if people take those seriously, I just learn a lot about what I need to do and how I can grow by talking to my administrators.... We had to do these self-evaluations [this year] and it was almost identical what [my assistant principal and I] came up with about my strength and weaknesses. He was seeing what I was seeing. And to me that's a way to grow: when you see what your weaknesses are and then have people who you can trust to talk to about that.

Moreover, 4th Grade Teacher Debra spoke about how, through TLDP, she had learned a great deal about the importance of *shared accountability*. She also perceived that this would be an area of PD that would benefit all teachers new to the profession, explaining:

I think that if teachers in general knew how important every little single piece of information of what we do is, then there would be shared accountability across the board. But I don't think that teachers are well-informed of that.... That is the most important thing because I truly don't feel like—especially new teachers going in, they're usually struggling to hang on anyway during that first year—but those first five years, I don't think there's an understanding of shared accountability. It's talked about and...it's said, but I don't think there's an understanding about it.

**Create opportunities to collaborate and network.** Several key informants described how opportunities to network and collaborate were important aspects of effective PD. Tech Facilitator Thomas and HS Elective Teacher Linda discussed this through the context of their own district while ESL Teacher Hannah described ways to connect teachers with opportunities outside the confines of a given school system.

Explaining how she would specifically approach teacher leadership development, ESL Teacher Hannah suggested that if a school district did not already have something like TLDP in place, “...they wouldn’t have to reinvent the wheel,” and could instead take advantage of the types of existing online and professional network resources mentioned earlier that she had engaged in through her “own initiative.” Her views also appeared reminiscent of Frost’s (2012) theory of *leadership as learning* as well as the HertsCam network upon which this approach to teacher leadership development is predicated, as referenced in Chapter Two.

While reflecting on how elements of TLDP compared with his own preferences for learning, Tech Facilitator Thomas shared that the program’s flow, varied activities, and how participants were “...up and moving around...” were effective in keeping participants’ attention. Thomas also stated that while he viewed some learning is “...done in a vacuum...,” more effective opportunities to learn—whether they be in students’ classrooms or a PD workshop session—tend to occur “...in a group situation....”

Finally, HS Elective Teacher Linda described that aside from the relevance of any given PD initiative, she saw the effective use of PLCs across departments as something that could aid her current high school with its need for increased collaboration and might boost their teachers' morale. While she expressed this in the context of her own school's recent PD session, I found this context could also apply to a district perspective as the school system had only one high school. Explaining her thoughts on this topic, Linda posited:

When we had PD yesterday, you got to collaborate with people *outside* of your PLC's. And I think more of that, and understanding more about how all of our curriculums cross over and interrelate...I think that really helps. I think that most people want just an opportunity to collaborate outside of our PLC's because there's just not time to do that. Do we need team building exercises? That would help, I mean it wouldn't hurt. I don't know that it has to be that [but] maybe an opportunity to bring PLC's together. You know in [our] department, we basically take what they learn in math, what they learn in English, in civics, in economics, or whatever, and we apply that; and that ability for us to understand that crossover on both sides of it [is important] so that our students can gain from that.

**Summary of teachers' preferences.** In this section, key informants' perceptions of how school districts might support effective PD were presented. Findings indicated that these participants believed school districts could best support their teachers' professional development through relevant opportunities that are based on teachers' input, differentiated to meet teachers' developmental needs and interests, and that promote collaboration or networking. Moreover, one participant believed that if a

district had not already implemented a program such as TLDP, they could just point their teachers toward a variety of resources already available outside of their school system.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I examined a *constructivist lens of teacher learning* through the presentation of various teacher-focused, qualitative data. Findings from these data were based on an analysis of end-of-program written reflections that were archived by the district over the first four years of TLDP's existence, the results of a qualitative survey that I administered to participants as they were about to begin TLDP's fourth cohort, and an analysis of in-depth interviews that I conducted with seven teachers who acted as key informants before and after they completed the program.

Findings that emerged from the written reflection and survey data indicated that: (1) a majority of TLDP's participants intended to remain as classroom teachers but had the desire to continue to grow as leaders through school-based, district-level, or graduate school experiences; (2) some TLDP participants viewed the program as a next step towards perceived career advancements such as into a formal lead teacher or school administrator position; (3) a majority of TLDP participants perceived the program positively, could identify specific ways they had grown professionally as a result, and wanted their schools/district to provide even more opportunities for them to enact teacher leadership; and (4) participants appeared to learn the most through TLDP about project-based collaboration, communication with colleagues, and the change process (each of which were intentional themes of the program).

An analysis of the one-to-one interviews with key informants indicated that these teachers: (1) could each identify specific ways in which their views of teacher leadership had developed over the course of the previous year—whether from experiences within or outside of TLDP; (2) each expressed how specific aspects of TLDP had impacted their professional development, such as the nature of district-level participation, the group project, or other elements of the program’s scope and sequence; (3) shared specific critiques about the nature of TLDP and in some cases offered suggestions for how the program might therefore improve; and (4) viewed effective professional development as that which was relevant, differentiated based on teachers’ developmental needs, and that promoted networking and collaboration.

In the final chapter, I will present conclusions about my findings from this case study and will make several recommendations to school systems and practitioners related to teacher leadership development. As Chapter Six is based on findings from the distributed leadership lens *and* constructivist lens of teacher learning, it will therefore be presented as a *bi-focal view of teacher leadership development*.

## CHAPTER VI

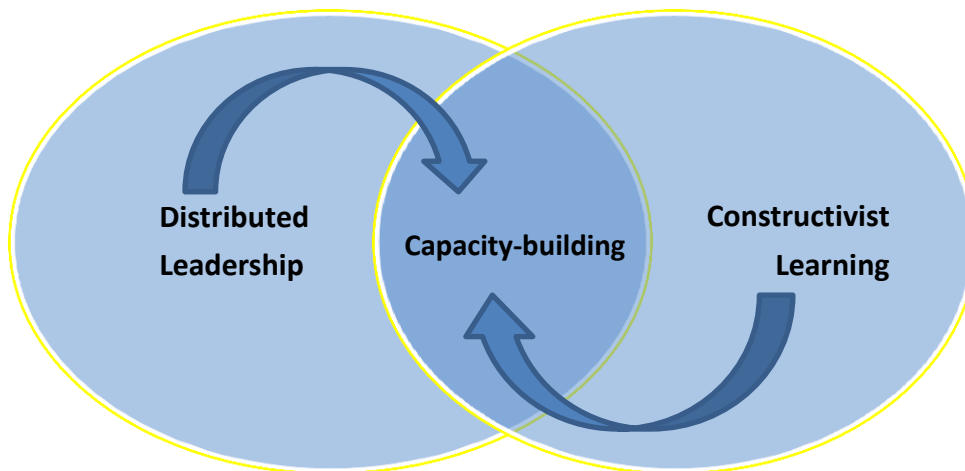
### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS THROUGH A BIFOCAL VIEW OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A conscious challenge that I embraced throughout this project was to design and implement a case study that went beyond the nature of program evaluation and instead examined data in ways that would add to the existing body of research (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). Just as Flyvberg (2006) and Stake (1995) have cautioned about the limitations of case study, I remained cognizant of how my findings were based on participants' experiences related to one program in one particular district in North Carolina. Moreover, this study was driven by a specific set of questions derived from the extant literature, my positionality as a researcher, and the conceptual framework that I ultimately adopted in order to examine the issue of how a school system might support the development of its teachers as leaders. In this final chapter, I will present conclusions, recommendations to practitioners, and my areas of interest for future research that are based on findings from this case study. I will first reexamine my adopted conceptual framework by revisiting *distributed leadership* and a *constructivist view of teacher professional development* through findings from this research.

### Conclusions Based on Revisiting the Conceptual Framework

Through this case study, I examined how one school system addressed a mandate in North Carolina that all teachers must demonstrate leadership. Methodologically, I designed this case study in order to compare two distinct lenses of data: the perceptions of *teachers* and the perceptions of *district administrators* about the same school system-sponsored program and the nature of teacher leadership development. The framework for this study was therefore conceptualized as an intersection of *distributed leadership*—the efforts of a district to impact its success by developing and distributing leadership throughout its organization—and *constructivist views* of teachers’ professional learning by those who took part in these efforts. In Chapter Two, I illustrated how the literature pointed toward *capacity-building* as a common construct of each of these two lenses. A simplified version of this illustration is revisited in Figure 3, below:

Figure 3. Revisiting the Conceptual Framework as Capacity-Building



What Figure 3 represents, however, is the conceptual framework I adopted *prior* to collecting and analyzing any data. Thus, I will now examine each conceptual lens based on my research findings to present an updated version of this framework. This is intended to support the main conclusions and implications of this case study.

### **The Distributed Leadership Lens Revisited**

It was evident that many participants throughout this case study envisioned the elements of distributed leadership in several forms, including capacity-building. The main thrust of this in terms of TLDP was that the district's first formal objective was to "build leadership capacity of all teachers." District leaders such as Superintendent Dr. Arnold and Curriculum Director Elizabeth subsequently referenced their teachers' abilities to lead district-level PLC meetings, facilitate professional development sessions, or take a central role in curriculum development as examples of TLDP's successes in building the capacity of their system's teachers as leaders. Aside from capacity-building, district leaders also viewed distributed leadership as a means of *shared leadership* and *building one's sphere of influence or legacy*. For example, Superintendent Dr. Arnold described how the school system's strategic planning initiative was an example of "...modeling shared leadership..." and how this led to new strategies that "...came bubbling up in every corner..." as various stakeholders took part in establishing goals for their district's improvement. Furthermore, Curriculum Director Rachel described that her view of distributed leadership resembled creating "...a web of influence..." through which, for instance, leaders taught followers best instructional practices and followers



further disseminated such leadership and expertise to others. Similarly, Assistant Superintendent Beverly recounted how she had recently been asked to take over the leadership of TLDP due to Dr. Arnold's retirement and that this signified the capacity that had been developed in *her* to carry on an element of her former superintendent's legacy.

Beyond district leaders, I found that some teachers had rather well-formed conceptualizations of distributed leadership after they had experienced TLDP that were expressed as *shared leadership*, *exerting greater influence*, and *building capacity in others*. Such conceptualizations were evident across the archived written reflections whenever TLDP participants articulated the ways in which they now had the capacity to influence their schools and take on more responsibilities. These types of responses centered upon *greater capacity to collaborate*, *an enhanced ability to understand and support change*, and *having the confidence to now step forward and enact leadership*. Moreover, when key informants such as Curriculum Facilitator Melissa and Tech Facilitator Thomas addressed the issue of capacity-building, they also equated this to a form of *shared leadership*. Curriculum Facilitator Melissa described her views of shared leadership by stating that "...you need teachers and other people to be willing to lead [professional development initiatives] themselves within the school." She found that it was therefore worthwhile to take time and include other teacher leaders in acts of promoting change to ensure such initiatives had the best chance of taking hold in the long run. Along these lines, Curriculum Facilitator Melissa recalled how she had

strategically shared the responsibility of instituting a new reading fluency program at her school, explaining, “I was building my own capacity, but then I was building capacity in other teachers...by them having that awareness [of the reading program’s effectiveness].”

Tech Facilitator Thomas also sensed that capacity-building could be accomplished through consciously sharing his own experiences with colleagues in ways that ultimately helped them to grow professionally. He observed this through his experiences in TLDP, particularly with the group project, as well as in his own professional practice of making public presentations on instructional technology. Illuminating his views, Thomas stated:

The way I see it is that once a teacher does something [new], it kind of prepares them for something else that comes around; it gives them the confidence or ability to do a little bit more. I present at conferences around the state (stated names of conferences withheld).... In these conferences, each time I present, I take a teacher with me to help present. This is just an aside, but it is a similar type of thing [to TLDP]. I would take another teacher with me who has not presented before...to give them the opportunity and to experience the ability to do it on their own.

In sum, findings from this case study indicated some additional aspects of distributed leadership, aside from capacity-building, in which distributed leadership perhaps connected closely to a constructivist view of teacher learning. The three characterizations of distributed leadership expressed by participants that I found to also

connect closely to constructivist views of learning included: *shared leadership*, *increasing the sphere of one's influence*, and *legacy-building*.

### **The Constructivist Learning Lens Revisited**

While no participant used the term *constructivist learning* in any of our interviews, nor did this term appear in a single written reflection, I found it logical to infer that the views expressed by district administrators, key informants, and other TLDP participants around distributed leadership, shared leadership, and capacity-building were closely connected to acts of learning that were consistent with a constructivist lens. I drew this conclusion from the ways in which participants described their preferred learning styles and the nature of teacher leadership development through concepts such as professional learning communities, collaboration, networking, sharing ideas and best practices, learning through mentally and physically safe environments, engaging in group projects, team problem-solving, self-reflection, and understanding self and others to help strengthen the team and promote change. As a result, these concepts collectively indicated that *self-reflection* and *a safe/collaborative learning environment* were seen as important elements of effective professional development.

It appeared that one of the strengths of the district's program in catering to such constructivist forms of learning was that TLDP provided teachers with opportunities to work through mock scenarios, role-play, and reflect upon and discuss each strand of the program's scope and sequence. Some key informants expressed that they were appreciative of these elements of the program, even when TLDP pushed the limits of

their comfort with self-reflection, discussions, and/or public speaking. For instance, though sharing that she was not someone who enjoyed writing self-reflections, HS Elective Teacher Linda observed that TLDP “...was very interactive... [and it] definitely made you kind of sit down afterwards and de-brief [each piece of] information.”

In sharing her views on how she learned best, 4th Grade Teacher Debra discussed how she was “...a visual learner...” and stated, “I like seeing an example of something before I commit to it.” She also perceived that learning in community is important, explaining, “I think that other people are essential to our learning. I don’t know how you can learn without someone else other than by experimenting.”

Curriculum Facilitator Melissa articulated how an element of TLDP, by design, forced her to “...go against the grain...” of her introverted style of learning and collaboration. As Melissa explained, the personality inventory and self-reflective activities presented through the program helped her learn more about her tendencies which, in turn, caused her to find more balance between her need for introspection and the value she recognized in brainstorming and collaborating with others. Explaining this discovery, she stated:

...[W]e learned that if you are an extrovert, you draw energy from other people but if you are an introvert, you draw energy from within. So, it can be overwhelming for you to be in large groups because it takes so much of your energy, whereas an extrovert is energized by that. If something is stressful or overwhelming, to be in a group draws more out from me. It makes me more fatigued, mentally and in all aspects. So, I do still prefer to digest something on my own and then I can take it to a group once I’ve had my think time on my own.

Finally, Tech Facilitator Thomas connected the “...group situation...” in which TLDP was conducted to his own philosophy on teaching, sharing that:

The content to a degree is almost secondary to what we are teaching. I think we’re teaching how to get along, how to work with other people, how to be tolerant, how to be assertive, how to just be a good person. I think some of our teachers teach that as well as their content, and I think that’s taught in a group situation; in a classroom situation.

Therefore, findings from this case study supported the prevalence of capacity-building within a constructivist view of teacher leadership development. Additionally, these findings suggested that the concepts of *personal awareness*, a *safe environment for learning*, and *collaboration* were also important to TLDP participants’ leadership development experiences.

### **Refocusing the Lenses of this Study**

The original conceptual framework I adopted for this case study helped me to focus this research through two lenses: a *distributed leadership lens* focused on the district’s perspective and a *constructivist learning lens* focused on the perspectives of the teachers. Furthermore, through examining my findings about the nature of TLDP and what/how its participants learned about teacher leadership, I was able to conceptualize an updated version of this bifocal framework. For instance, as discussed in Chapters Four and Five, district administrators and a majority of teachers described teacher leaders as experts in their field and active participants in an ongoing cycle of learning, problem-solving, and collaboration with others. I also found it evident that

TLDP was never presented to the school system as some intervention for sub-par performance (Argent, 2012), nor as a professional development experience that was otherwise couched in a system of controls and rewards (Spillane, 2002). Instead, although limited to a cap of 26 teachers per year, TLDP was billed by district leaders as an opportunity “...for all teachers...” and was meant as a pathway for developing their teachers’ abilities to collaboratively lead the innovations and initiatives that were needed to meet the demands of public education. Therefore, findings from this case study have led me to two conclusions about the nature of TLDP and what/how teachers learned about teacher leadership. First, district leaders’ and teachers’ views on distributed leadership aligned closely with shared leadership and building capacity in others. Second, TLDP promoted distributed leadership *through* a constructivist view of teacher professional development.

**Participants’ views of distributed leadership closely aligned with notions of shared leadership and building capacity in others.** I found that participants described the concept of distributed leadership most often as a preference for/interest in sharing leadership experiences and responsibilities in ways that would build their own capacity and the capacity of others. Hence, *capacity-building* and *shared leadership* were two of Mayrowetz’s (2008) “uses” of distributed leadership that I concluded were present in the nature of TLDP and the perceptions of its participants. I observed these uses in participants’ views on communicating a vision for change, facilitating opportunities for

others to lead and grow professionally, expanding one's own sphere of influence (Covey, 1989), and carrying on the work of a formal leader once that leader is no longer present.

Considering Mayrowetz's (2008) other "uses" of distributed leadership, I have also concluded that *efficiency* (i.e., simply spreading out the work load) and *purporting democracy* (i.e., distribution under the pretense of giving others voice) were not logically connected to my case study findings. For instance, Superintendent Dr. Arnold's reference to building an "...army of leaders..." demonstrated her belief that a critical mass of teacher leaders was needed to affect lasting improvements in their district's performance. However, I found through how she and other district leaders recounted the nature of TLDP and the accomplishments of their system's teacher leaders that this vision of "...an army of leaders..." was centered more upon a *pursuit of synergy through shared leadership* than some goal of efficiency across their district's operations.

Furthermore, no district leader ever referenced the term *democracy* or shared with me a vision for democratic schooling. While some district leaders such as Dr. Arnold did express a desire for teachers to exercise their voices for advocacy in ways that spread a positive message about public education, the majority of these comments were couched around raising the tenor of the teaching profession rather than advancing some vision for democratic leadership. Illustrating this distinction, Curriculum Director Elizabeth discussed how she believed teachers could garner more respect as leaders through dressing for work and acting in ways that she deemed as "...professional..." and

then stated, “We want teachers to be seen as leaders, we want them to aspire, to advocate for themselves, for their children, for their colleagues, for the profession.”

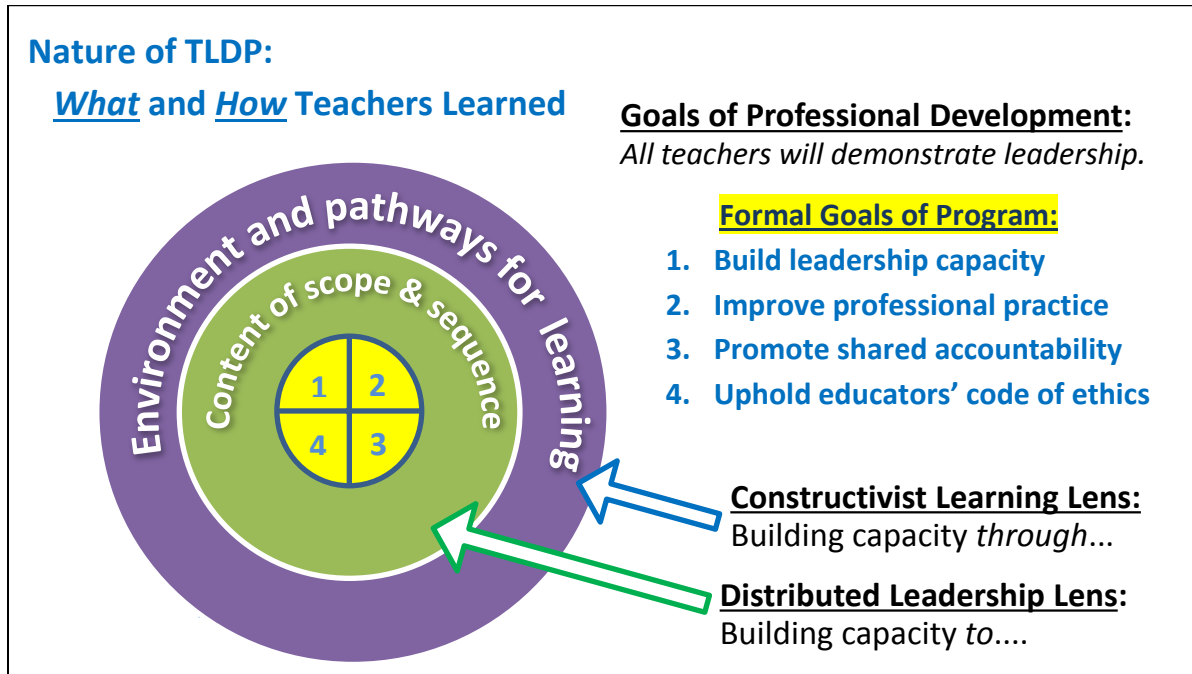
**The nature of TLDP promoted distributed forms of teacher leadership through a constructivist lens of teacher professional development.** Through this case study, district leaders’ perceptions of TLDP’s success as a program were predicated upon examples of how past participants had demonstrated the ability to enact leadership, such as through leading various forms of PLC discussions, through facilitating professional development opportunities for other teachers, by taking on formal lead teacher positions, and by supporting a culture of shared accountability through their proactive identification of/attempts to solve issues relevant to their individual schools or the district as a whole. The common thread woven through these perceptions was that district leaders viewed teachers as capable of leading the learning of other teachers in pursuit of school improvement and student achievement. This was reminiscent of conclusions by Spillane (2002) mentioned in Chapter Two in which district-level stakeholders who adopted a *situated/teacher leadership* perspective believed professional development could help form a “...critical mass of teacher leaders...” who would strive to learn more and motivate their colleagues to do the same (p. 395). District stakeholders in Spillane’s (2002) study also perceived professional development as a *social act* that approximated complex and constructivist views of learning (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000) and that could be supported through ongoing reflection



and inquiry that would ultimately improve instructional practices. These themes were also present in the nature of TLDP.

Therefore, based on findings from this case study and a reexamination of the original conceptual framework upon which this research was based, I have concluded that TLDP was a professional development program in which distributed leadership was promoted through an environment that favored constructivist views of teacher learning and professional development. This environment was described by key informants and in TLDP participants' reflections as one in which teachers could collaborate, share ideas without risk, and build their capacity and confidence to enact leadership. As a result of this conclusion, I have refocused the two lenses of my conceptual framework in order to capture the ways in which findings from this case study indicated that perceptions of distributed leadership and constructivist views of teacher learning were connected. Figure 4 on page 198 provides an overview of this conceptualization. In this revised conceptual framework, I have depicted the manner in which a constructivist view of teacher learning and professional development created the environment and pathways around which teachers built their capacity to more extensively and effectively distribute leadership throughout their schools and school system. At the center, I have inserted the formal goals/objectives of TLDP as these clearly linked the program's implementation to how NCPTS defined teachers as demonstrating leadership.

Figure 4. Reestablishing a Conceptual Framework Based on Findings about TLDP



In addition, I have summarized in Table 7 (on the next page) how views of constructivist learning and elements of distributed leadership were related to *what* and *how* teachers learned through their experiences in TLDP. Each row of this table is connected, in a sense, by a two-directional arrow. Table 7 therefore elaborates on Figure 4 and summarizes how the various aspects of leadership capacity-building that were developed in teachers who participated in TLDP were approached by the school system through a constructivist learning lens. The contents of Figure 4 were derived from the scope and sequence of TLDP, as was presented with more detail in Chapter Four.

Table 7. Summary of What and How Teachers Developed Leadership through a Constructivist View of Learning

<b>Distributed Leadership Lens</b> <i>Teachers built capacity to:</i>	<b>Constructivist Learning Lens</b> <i>Teachers built capacity through:</i>
Better understand their personality tendencies and those of their colleagues	Establishing a safe environment for learning and discussion; completing surveys and inventories; engaging in self-reflections/group discussions
Better collaborate and support effective teamwork, including PLC discussions based on student data and action-oriented school improvement projects	Professional readings; learning to recognize an environment of effective teamwork; role-playing; group discussions; team problem-solving
Understand, support, and lead processes of change to help lead and support innovation and demands of education	Reading/discussing a metaphorical text; self-reflecting on various tendencies & discussing with the group; engaging in mock scenarios (i.e., "change game")
Better understand realities of students as members of the community, especially in the context of living in poverty and the nature of privilege in society	Personal testimonials from presenters; a simulation activity ("privilege walk"); self-reflection and group discussions; workshop presentations based on best practices in the literature
Identify elements of a healthy school culture and develop ways to improve a school's climate and culture	Professional readings; workshop presentations; administering surveys to colleagues; reflecting on and discussing their results and findings
Communicate a positive message about public education throughout their schools and community; advocate for positive changes in public education	Discussions at workshops; professional readings; role-playing with other participants and presenters; self-reflections and discussions
Learn about, develop, and share best instructional practices with colleagues across their schools and the district	Presentations on/sharing of best practices and resources; group discussions; sharing group project content and results with presenters, participants, and administrators

### **Implications of a Constructivist View of Distributed Leadership**

The conclusions discussed above may be useful for others who wish to examine the ways in which public school systems have approached the issue of developing teachers as leaders through a constructivist view of teacher professional development. These conclusions may also prove useful to others who wish to examine examples of teachers and district leaders who hold similar views of capacity-building and shared leadership as preferred uses of distributed leadership. However, these conclusions do not imply that the nature of what and how teachers developed capacity to lead through TLDP could simply be replicated elsewhere as some *one-size-fits-all* approach to teacher leadership development. For instance, I also found that issues of scalability, the limited role of the principal, and perceptions about the nature of teachers leading in an underprofessionalized field were also implicated through my case study findings. I will therefore further examine these implications in the sections ahead in order to present additional conclusions from this research and make recommendations to practitioners.

### **Further Conclusions based on Case Study Findings**

In this section, I will present three major conclusions that are supported by case study data that were presented in Chapters Four and Five as well as elements of the extant literature discussed in Chapter Two. These three conclusions, which also serve as the basis for recommendations I will present to practitioners later in this chapter, are:

1. Scalability becomes an important issue when considering the ways in which a school system might effectively develop the capacity of all of its teachers as leaders through a program such as TLDP.
2. The nature of TLDP was such that principals played a limited role in developing teacher leadership throughout this professional development model.
3. The nature of what and how teachers learned about leadership through TLDP was partially aligned *and* partially misaligned with some scholars' views on how to raise the tenor of the teaching profession (i.e., professionalize teaching).

### **Conclusions about Scalability**

One of the major conclusions I drew from the results of this case study was that if other school systems were to consider ways in which they could develop all of their teachers' capacities as leaders, they would need to consider the issue of *scalability* in designing an approach that best fit their needs for teacher leadership development. I have drawn this conclusion from two main issues that emerged from this case study. First, a comparison of the recent teacher turnover rate in the district I examined with the amount of teachers who completed TLDP during those same years indicated that their teacher turnover was, in a sense, outpacing their teacher leader development rate. Second, the relatively small size of this particular district posed an advantage to their implementation of TLDP that would need to be considered by others who are interested in the specific professional development approach I have outlined in this case study.

### **Teacher turnover negatively impacted the district's goal of all teachers**

**developing their capacities as leaders.** The reasons why teachers leave the profession or simply transfer to other schools and systems is an important issue in public education that is beyond the scope of this case study. However, according to the most recently available statistical profile of the district I examined, their approximate teacher turnover rate for the first three years of TLDP was 10% for year one, 13% for year two, and 20% for year three. During these same years, North Carolina's statewide average for teacher turnover rates were publicly reported as 11.2%, 12.1%, and 14.43%, respectively. What this meant was that while around 25 teachers completed TLDP annually from 2010 to 2014, approximately 40 to 80 teachers annually left their schools or the district altogether. Granted, some of the district's turnover was attributed to a few teachers' decisions to accept promotions into the sorts of instructional facilitator positions district leaders viewed as markers of TLDP's success. Nonetheless, teacher turnover in a sense outpaced teacher leadership development for the four years leading up to this research.

When Superintendent Dr. Arnold asserted that around one-fourth of the school system's teachers had completed TLDP, I found that this claim did not consider the prevalence of teacher turnover. Rather, her statement was a generalization based only on the fact that 102 teachers had completed TLDP over a four-year period and that the district employed approximately 400 teachers across its schools. However, I found that other district leaders did express their thoughts about the challenges that turnover had created for their system in developing all teachers as leaders. Such challenges were

discussed, for instance, when Assistant Superintendent Beverly referenced teacher turnover as a factor in why they had “...started seeing more novice teachers in the cohort...” Curriculum Director Rachel also mentioned the challenges that turnover had posed to their district’s efforts to establish best practices across their district. This assertion was based on her recollection of the number of school administrators who had also left the system since the year when their district engaged principals and assistant principals in professional development on the magnitudes of change—a topic discussed in Chapter Four that later evolved into a mainstay in the scope and sequence of TLDP.

Findings from this case study therefore indicated that even with a vision of building all teachers’ capacity as leaders, district leaders’ efforts to cycle all teachers through TLDP were outpaced by the rate with which teachers had vacated their school system or the profession in general. Thus, I have concluded that if a school system were to consider ways in which it could develop all of its teachers’ capacities as leaders, they should do so in a manner that simultaneously impacts *all of its teachers* and does not do so incrementally over a period of years—as was the case with TLDP.

**The district’s size posed an advantage for implementing TLDP.** It was evident that the size of the district I examined allowed them to engage one-sixteenth of their system’s teachers in a program that was attended each month by all of their district-level leaders. Superintendent Dr. Arnold also mentioned this point when she was describing the ways her school system approached forms of shared leadership. This district needed to include eight schools and one early childhood education center in the

TLDP initiative. However, there are other public school systems in North Carolina that have two, three, or almost twenty times that amount of schools. The context of a professional development session attended by 25 teachers and 10 district-level stakeholders in larger districts would consequently either represent a smaller proportion of those systems' employees or workshop attendance would need to be expanded in order to keep them aligned with the ratios that were demonstrated through TLDP.

Therefore, I have concluded that larger school systems would be at a disadvantage in adopting a program identical to TLDP. My conclusion is based on how TLDP's opportunities for networking, collaboration, and engaging in discussions with district leaders that were identified by key informants as such positive elements of the program would become diffuse and harder to achieve in larger districts and/or professional development settings. It is possible that the lack of such elements could, in turn, hinder the quality of teacher leadership development efforts. In addition, school districts would need to consider whether the annual \$500 stipend and \$700 for substitute teachers expended on each participant of TLDP were costs they believed they could/should incur for the sake of implementing such a program.

### **Conclusions about the Role of Principals throughout TLDP**

Case study findings indicated that approximately three to five school administrators were assigned the task of leading one session of TLDP per year. The nature of TLDP also promoted some involvement around the nature of the program



between principals and their teachers who participated in this professional development initiative. This involvement was limited to: (a) principals being asked to identify and nominate the teachers whom they wanted to participate in each successive cohort; (b) TLDP participants being required to obtain approval from their principals before commencing with their group projects; (c) principals being required to review and discuss with their teachers who were participating in TLDP the results of a school climate survey those teachers administered to their colleagues; and (d) principals and assistant principals being invited to attend the TLDP group project presentations by teachers from their school. However, I have also concluded through an examination of case study data and relevant extant literature that the limited roles principals played in implementing TLDP emerged as a problematic issue when considering the notions of scalability of the program and the foundations of effective distributed leadership.

The perceptions shared by some participants that principals should take on a more extensive role in TLDP were central to my conclusion. However, other than Curriculum Director Rachel's district-level perspective "...that administrators should have been cycled through [the program]," no participants gave any indication of *how* sustained presence by principals at workshop sessions would be possible throughout this professional development approach. The nature of TLDP was such that if a principal were to attend the monthly sessions, they would need to be absent from their schools for seven days on which students were in session—in addition to any other meetings they were required to attend by the district (e.g., Superintendent Dr. Arnold referred to

their district/school administrator meetings as also meeting once per month). This could in turn cause other negative effects to the safety and success of principals' schools. Furthermore, if principals were dedicating this time to participation in TLDP, they would then conceivably be concentrating their efforts on supporting the leadership development of approximately two to four of their teachers and, by extension, *not* concentrating such efforts on the dozens of other teachers who served on their faculty. This sort of practice would contradict the foundations of effective distributed leadership as discussed in the literature (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Mayrowetz, 2008; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

My conclusions about principals' limited roles in TLDP are neither an indictment about the quality of the experiences that participants expressed having had in TLDP nor dismissive of district leaders' sustained efforts to engage in TLDP that were observed and admired by their participants. As was discussed in Chapter Five, a majority of those who participated in this study as key informants and/or who submitted written reflections to their district described TLDP as a positive professional development experience through which their confidence and capacities to lead grew in noticeable ways. However, I have also concluded that if an approach similar to TLDP were to be *scaled up* (Glennan, Bodilly, Galegher, & Kerr, 2004) in ways that could simultaneously impact the leadership development of all teachers across a school system, this would only be possible with the intense, widely distributed involvement and support of principals.

Beyond my findings from this case study, it is important to point out that elements of the extant literature also support the importance of principals' roles in distributing leadership throughout their schools and developing the capacity of their teachers as leaders to support student success. For example, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) described through a review of research on successful school leadership that principals (referred to as "head teachers" in their study) had the greatest magnitude of influence on their schools as compared to patterns of distribution of leadership that were examined from all other sources such as teachers, parents, and district-level officials. Moreover, a recent report from The Wallace Foundation (2013) listed "cultivating leadership in others" as one of five key descriptors of the practices of effective principals. Additionally, one of those cited by The Wallace Foundation as major contributors to their report concluded that student achievement was related to teachers and principals sharing leadership and stated, "It is apparently the case that collegial relationships among adults in the school, whether principal-teacher or teacher-teacher, lead to stronger focused instruction," (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; p. 48).

Therefore, it is my conclusion that in order for a district to simultaneously promote the leadership development of all of its teachers, principals must play a more extensive role than what was evidenced through this case study of TLDP.

## Conclusions about TLDP's Role in the Professionalization of Teaching

As I set forth in this research process, I was reminded through the wisdom of my dissertation committee about the broader possibilities and moral purpose of inquiry that would examine the nature of a teacher leadership development program. It was through this wisdom that I was introduced to Mehta's (2013) text on the underprofessionalization of teaching. It was also through my committee's guidance that I was reminded of the original inspiration I had derived from reviewing literature that spoke to the professionalization of teaching (e.g., Frost, 2012). Finally, it was through some of the perceptions of key informants that I confronted first-hand the frustrations some teachers experience with the nature of their profession. For example, HS Elective Teacher Linda shared her views on the nature of the teaching profession and shared her dismay with some recent budget cuts that North Carolina's state government had authorized, stating:

There's always these proposed changes going on with education. I feel like they always just take it piece by piece, bite by bite, taking away from the teachers. And I just think there's a lack of professionalism; or sometimes you're not being treated like a professional. You know, a lot of people want to equate education to business. We're *not* a profit and loss business, yet we need to communicate like we *are* in a business. We need to treat teachers like they are professionals because they all have teaching degrees and have been to a four year school, *minimum*. And...I think that comes top down and I think our state legislature has not really shown that. I think that's across the board and it trickles down. You know, I didn't start out teaching. I was in business first. That is one of the hardest things: I don't think teachers are treated very professionally by some administration. I'm not saying all, [but] by some administration. And I also think by our legislature.

As such, I will now present my third and final major conclusion about what others can learn from this case study: The nature of TLDP was *partially aligned* and *partially misaligned* with some scholars' views on raising the tenor of the teaching profession. I will first provide an overview of the sorts of scholarly views with which I have compared my case study findings. Following this overview, I will present the results of my comparison.

**Summarizing some scholars' views on the professionalization of teaching.** As was discussed in Chapters One and Two, the teaching profession has been evolving since the mid-1800's from the days of the one-room schoolhouse into the complex systems of structure and governance that exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Mehta, 2013; Spring, 2005). Furthermore, scholarship around teacher leadership has evolved, but has resulted in more detailed accounts of what teacher leaders *do* versus *who they are* within the profession (Swaffield, 2014; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This case study follows suit in some regards. For instance, some of my findings discussed in Chapter Five examined the nature of what TLDP participants believed they were more equipped *to do* and how key informants' views of teacher leadership changed to an extent through their participation in that program. Similarly, findings in Chapter Four revealed that district-leaders defined the *actions* of past TLDP participants, such as taking on a formal teacher leadership position or leading a PLC discussion, as evidence that those teachers had grown in their capacities as leaders. Yet, as Frost (2014) notes about the vision of the HertsCam network and its dedication to advancing the *reprofessionalization* of teaching,

“A cornerstone of our vision is that leadership can become part of the professional identity and practice of any education practitioner whether or not they hold a position in the organisation or have a role of special responsibility,” (p. 3).

In some of the most recent work being put forth on professionalizing teaching, Swaffield (2014) described the main elements of “The Leadership for Learning Framework” (which was mentioned in Chapter Two and is related to Frost’s “HertsCam network”) in which teachers: sustain a focus on learning for their students, their community, and themselves; create conditions that are ideal for learning; engage in dialogue and reflection in/beyond their school around their instructional practices; share leadership to build their capacity as leaders and enhance the learning of others; and share in a sense of accountability to ensure that learning improves and the school drives the publicly shared narrative of its own work. Based on these elements, Swaffield (2014) argued in favor of: teachers, students, and parents sharing their experiences and expertise; collaboration that crossed the boundaries of formal roles or status; and everyone in a school being “...encouraged to take the lead as appropriate to task and context,” (p.7).

The analyses mentioned above are emblematic of a view that positions teachers and their school communities as the drivers of their own leadership and learning. Moreover, the very premise that shared accountability centers upon acts of schools self-reflecting and self-reporting their successes and failures may seem foreign to those living in the United States. This is understandable as these ideas emanated from

*Western Europe*. In the United States, on the other hand (and in North Carolina, by extension), a host of competing political forces and economic interests have persisted in marginalizing the role of teachers as skilled laborers and position the systems of accountability within a deep bed of bureaucracy (Mehta, 2013, Spring 2005).

Those who wish to professionalize the field of teaching through limiting the government's oversight and influence as well as increasing the rigor of preparedness and compensation for teaching as a profession have been met with resistance and experienced frustration (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Mehta, 2013). As Mehta (2013) pointed out, "The professionalizers faced external resistance from skeptical legislators unwilling to relinquish control over schooling and internal resistance from a teaching force still wedded to the protections of industrialized unionism," (p. 134). However, Mehta (2013) also noted that while large-scale initiatives such as *No Child Left Behind* (2001) and *Race to the Top* (2009) exemplify how the United States Federal Government has continued to wield increasing levels of control upon the teaching profession, glimpses of hope also exist. Through these glimpses, Mehta (2013) posited that schools, not mountainous bureaucracies, will lead in the hiring and development of human capital, will ensure power is equitably distributed between principals and teachers, and will blaze pathways to improvements that may break up the "one best system" (mentioned in Chapter One) that has acted to derail the legitimacy of teaching as a profession.

Based on a comparison of my case study data analysis with the scholarly views discussed above, I found that to an extent, district leaders saw the need to raise the tenor of the teaching profession and crafted ways for TLDP to help do so. However, other issues emerged through the data that ran counter to the professionalization of teaching and that would need to be addressed in order for an approach such as TLDP to have a greater impact on the tenor of the profession. I have organized this comparison into two sections, below: *alignment with professionalization* and *misalignment with professionalization*.

**TLDP aligned with the professionalization of teaching in four ways.** I argue that there were four ways in which TLDP was aligned with scholarly views mentioned above on the professionalization of teaching. These four areas of alignment are listed below, followed by a discussion of each area. I found that TLDP:

1. Facilitated and promoted collaboration and networking among teachers;
2. Encouraged teachers to remain in, and lead from, the classroom;
3. Broadened teachers' perspectives about the nature of public education; and
4. Promoted shared accountability for the success of school/district.

***Facilitated and promoted collaboration and networking.*** One way in which TLDP supported the professionalization of teaching was to promote collaboration and networking among teachers across the district. The district promoted collaboration and networking through practices such as facilitating group discussions, encouraging teachers to spend time at workshops with colleagues from other schools and various



district leaders, assigning the TLDP group project, and engaging participants in activities that would aid their abilities to self-reflect and effectively work with colleagues who had opinions and personality tendencies different from their own. As TLDP progressed over the years, the district also added the capability for teachers to communicate and collaborate virtually through the use of Moodle.

***Encouraged teachers to lead from their classrooms.*** In comparison to the study reviewed in Chapter Two by Bradley-Levine (2011) in which seven of eight key informants who attended a teacher leadership graduate program aspired to leave the classroom for careers as administrators, I found the results of my study of TLDP to be quite different. While a portion of TLDP participants did express a desire to pursue administration or a formal lead teacher position, a majority of participants stated that they intended to stay in the classroom upon completing the program. Moreover, I found that the prevailing focus of TLDP was upon teachers learning to lead within their classrooms, their schools, and across the district while remaining as classroom instructors. For example, in Chapter Four, Curriculum Director Elizabeth discussed that although some formal teacher leaders had matriculated through TLDP, she did not view it as a program designed to “...yank people out...” from their teaching positions. Similarly, Assistant Superintendent Beverly cautioned against teacher leaders assuming de facto assistant principal roles. Moreover, in Chapter Five I shared how key informant ESL Teacher Hannah admired the work of Berry, Byrd, and Wieder (2013) who

advocated for teachers to remain in the classroom. One key informant, 4th Grade Teacher Debra, illustrated agreement with these points when she stated:

I didn't feel pushed to come out of the classroom. I *did* feel pushed to be a stronger voice for my team and be a stronger voice for my school....I feel more confident in my ability to share my knowledge and share my opinion than before.

Therefore, I have concluded that relative consensus existed among district leaders and participants of TLDP that while some teachers did aspire to endeavor outside of classroom teaching, TLDP was designed to promote ways in which teachers could learn to effectively lead from their current positions.

***Broadened teachers' perspectives.*** It was evident that a major focus of the district through TLDP was to broaden participants' perspectives about the nature of public education. As mentioned in Chapter Five, key informants such as 4th Grade Teacher Debra were quite pleased with how TLDP helped them to understand not only *what* teachers were required to do, but also "...why it's so important that it gets done." One way this happened was that teachers learned about the challenges of implementing new initiatives and how change-agents needed to involve an array of stakeholders. A second main effect was that teachers spent time hearing about, reading about, and reflecting on the realities of poverty that existed within their schools' communities as well as the different levels of privilege that exist (i.e., among their colleagues and in society as a whole). I found this aligned with an element of professionalization in that,

as opposed to educators who might defer to external influences upon one's school or portray a despondent attitude toward change, teachers with broadened perspectives about change and the community could better impact reform and lead their schools in directions that directly benefit their students.

***Promoted shared accountability.*** The clearest connection I found between TLDP and the context of the scholarly views mentioned above on professionalizing teaching was that one of the program's formal objectives was to "promote a culture of shared accountability." The district approached this objective in several ways throughout the program, for instance by simulating exercises in collaboration and openly analyzing one's data with colleagues, by promoting the practice of PLCs to develop assessments and analyze students' learning, and by requiring group projects be linked to authentic issues of school improvement and engage multiple stakeholders at a school. I found that key informants perceived this objective had been promoted throughout the nature of TLDP rather than as some standalone topic. For example, HS Elective Teacher Linda stated:

I think it was more or less woven through the fabric of the [program], and as teachers we shoulder that accountability to show the others how to do it. They did talk a lot about how we need to be positive role models in our school; not the ones in the parking lot causing problems.

Curriculum Facilitator Melissa also commented on how her experiences through TLDP had prompted her to think a great deal about shared accountability and how

teachers needed to “buy-in” to initiatives in order for schoolwide effects to take hold. In recounting this aspect of the program, Curriculum Facilitator Melissa discussed the importance of “...being a team-player [and] trusting the strengths other people are going to have that I don’t have...” and posited that “If you can get people to have a common vision, then other things fall into place.”

**TLDP misaligned with the professionalization of teaching in two ways.** I also argue that there were two related ways in which TLDP misaligned with scholarly views mentioned above on the professionalization of teaching. These related areas of misalignment were that:

1. TLDP acted to legitimize teachers’ roles as leaders and
2. TLDP perpetuated the district’s influence upon teachers’ leadership.

***TLDP acted to legitimize teachers’ roles as leaders.*** As discussed above, scholars such as Frost (2012, 2014) have argued that the notions of formalizing teacher leadership positions or acting to legitimize teachers as leaders contradict the *identity* of teachers as leaders and therefore hinder the professionalization of the field. Stemming from this argument, I concluded that TLDP misaligned with such views of professionalization through my interpretation of the case study data.

I found that the district leaders’ references to past participants as “graduates” and as part of a growing group of “trained” or “developed” leaders symbolized a district-held view that TLDP was both necessary for, and effective in, legitimizing their district’s teachers as leaders. I found that Superintendent Dr. Arnold’s comments exemplified

this view, for example, when she discussed her positive perceptions of “...the club [past TLDP participants} had become,” even though she hedged such remarks by adding, “I don’t mean that in an exclusive way.....”

Along these lines, I also found it interesting that the only area of improvement Superintendent Dr. Arnold indicated TLDP needed (through our interview and in their formal program evaluation report) was to develop additional ways to support teachers after they had “graduated” from this program. Granted, it is not that I find fault with a school system wanting to craft additional ways to support and develop its teachers as leaders. Rather, I have presented this conclusion to illustrate a distinction between a teacher leadership development approach in which teachers are the drivers of their own leadership and professionalization and an approach whereby some other entity is the legitimizing source of such an identity. This also leads me to my next and final major conclusion.

***TLDP perpetuated the district’s influence upon teachers’ leadership.*** I also found that TLDP misaligned with some scholarly views on the professionalization of teaching as this program acted in various ways to perpetuate the district’s influence upon teachers’ leadership. I found that this misaligned with scholarly views on the professionalization of teaching in two ways. First, professionalization has been discussed as teachers building their own identity as leaders, as developing professionally through synergistic forms of collaboration and innovation, and as therefore serving as the sources of leadership for themselves and for their colleagues (Frost, 2012; Frost

2014; Swaffield, 2014). Second, professionalization has been discussed as teachers playing a central role in the recruitment, hiring, and development of other teachers (Mehta, 2013). Elements of TLDP contradicted each of these scholarly views. This conclusion was based on my findings that TLDP: (a) was a district-led initiative built upon a finite set of time and activities; (b) served as a district-level showcase opportunity for teachers through which every formal lead teacher position was filled by past program participants; and (c) acted to perpetuate district leaders' preferred sets of values, beliefs, and practices. I will now discuss these three findings, below.

First, and not surprising given the nature of my study, I found that TLDP was an initiative based on the premise that the superintendent and her administration were the best equipped sources for raising the tenor of teacher leadership across their system. Moreover, district leaders developed an approach to teacher leadership development that was built upon a scope of activities, occurring across a finite amount of time, and that enabled the district, as Superintendent Dr. Arnold stated, to "...[build] the capacity for teachers to step into the role when we want to share leadership." I have therefore concluded that TLDP would align more closely to the professionalization of teaching if its inherent constraints of time, space, and participant-capacity were removed. In this way, rather than persisting as a district-led initiative that happens at a particular time and place, leadership development could become a teacher-centric framework for learning (e.g., Frost, 2012; Swaffield, 2014) and could have the potential to raise the tenor of

teacher leadership by affecting all teachers in a system at once. I will further explicate this conclusion later in this chapter through my recommendations to practitioners.

Second, I found that the nature of how TLDP became what Superintendent Dr. Arnold described as “a showcase opportunity” whereby teachers were invited to take leave from their students, attend an eight-part workshop series, and extensively interact with district-level administrators was another example of how the district was perpetuating its centralized influence throughout the system. I found that this issue misaligned with some scholars’ views that the professionalization of teaching ought to involve teachers gaining greater influence over interviewing, professional development, and retention of other teachers (Mehta, 2013; Swaffield, 2014). Moreover, while I am not suggesting that district administrators should avoid forming opinions about those whom they hire, I am contending two suggestions in support of professionalizing teaching. I contend first that the “showcase” of teacher leadership should not happen in some workshop or laboratory setting, but rather should happen authentically through the nature of teachers’ work. I see this as showcasing teachers’ leadership through real-time observations, through authentic artifacts of their students’ learning, and in the presence of students. In addition, similar to Mehta (2013), I contend that a conscious effort should be made on the part of school systems to prop their teachers up as the sources of authority on recruitment, hiring, professional development, and retention. This might be done through such means as encouraging (and arranging time for) teachers to lead public education job fairs, to speak publicly about their own views at

universities and/or other professional engagements, and to share a substantial role in the hiring and leadership development of other teachers.

Third, TLDP acted in part to promote the existing district culture by encouraging participants to share in the values, beliefs, expectations, and aspirations that the superintendent and her district-level leaders wished to disseminate and perpetuate throughout their school system. This was communicated to participants through multiple pathways, such as the scope and sequence of the program and through the extensiveness of self-reflections and discussions that were shared between teachers and district-level leaders. Moreover, I interpreted the district's use of a seven-part rubric to guide/evaluate the group projects of each TLDP cohort as symbolic of district leaders' exerting their influence upon and formalizing this aspect of leadership development.

**Implications of the district's influence upon teacher leadership development and the professionalization of teaching.** In my examination of the ways in which the district had influenced teachers' leadership development, I found that Superintendent Dr. Arnold was intrigued when I asked her to consider whether TLDP had acted to replicate the existing district culture or if the existing culture had evolved as a result of TLDP. Though she expressed that she hoped it did both, Dr. Arnold's multiple references to "values" and "culture-building" as essential to TLDP indicated more so that the program had acted to disseminate her vision for the culture than did the district's culture change as a result of the program and its participants. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the only example Superintendent Dr. Arnold provided of the latter was



when she posited that TLDP had helped institutionalize PLCs in their district. Similarly, case study data also indicated that while teachers were encouraged to advocate for public education, district leaders stressed to them through TLDP that they should spread positivity about public schools and, similar to discourse in the political arena, should *stay on message*. Key informant Media Specialist Nancy referenced this point, for instance, when she recounted how district administrators encouraged teachers to demonstrate leadership by “...not being part of the problem.”

In presenting this implication, I also find it noteworthy that throughout this research process I did not come across any literature suggesting that effective leaders should avoid sharing their positive vision and beliefs or building a healthy culture for the organization. To the contrary, I observed that sharing a positive vision and culture-building were each well-defined, frequently referenced elements of the educational leadership literature that I reviewed (e.g., Bolman & Deal, 2010; Duffy, 2010; Fullan, 2001). Similarly, at a time when multiple interests are competing to replace the “one best” system of public education with alternatives such as charter schools and publicly funded private institutions (Mehta, 2013), I understand why public school employees would be encouraged to spread positive messages to others about their work.

In summary, I have concluded through my case study of TLDP that district-level leaders provided a salient assortment of opportunities that program participants found to have helped them develop their capacities and confidence to lead as well as gain new insights into the nature of public education. However, district-level leaders also

maintained their influence throughout this professional development experience and utilized the platform of their program to perpetuate what *they* saw as the ideal nature of their district's culture, to stress the nature of how *they* wanted teachers to advocate for public education, and to disseminate the instructional practices (e.g., project-based learning) that *they* viewed as most effective in meeting the broad-scale needs of their district. Therefore, to align more closely with scholarly views on the professionalization of teaching, I conclude that it must be the teachers who definitively, freely, and synergistically develop the practices, district culture, and context of advocacy upon which their heightened identities as leaders could be based. I will now turn to my recommendations to practitioners in order to further explicate this view.

### **Recommendations to Practitioners**

HS Elective Teacher Linda elaborated on the theme of professionalism and respect for teaching, stating:

I mean this is my tenth year as a teacher and sometimes you feel undervalued. I don't think most teachers do it to get a pat on the back. I don't think anyone would do it for that. You definitely want to be valued as a professional.

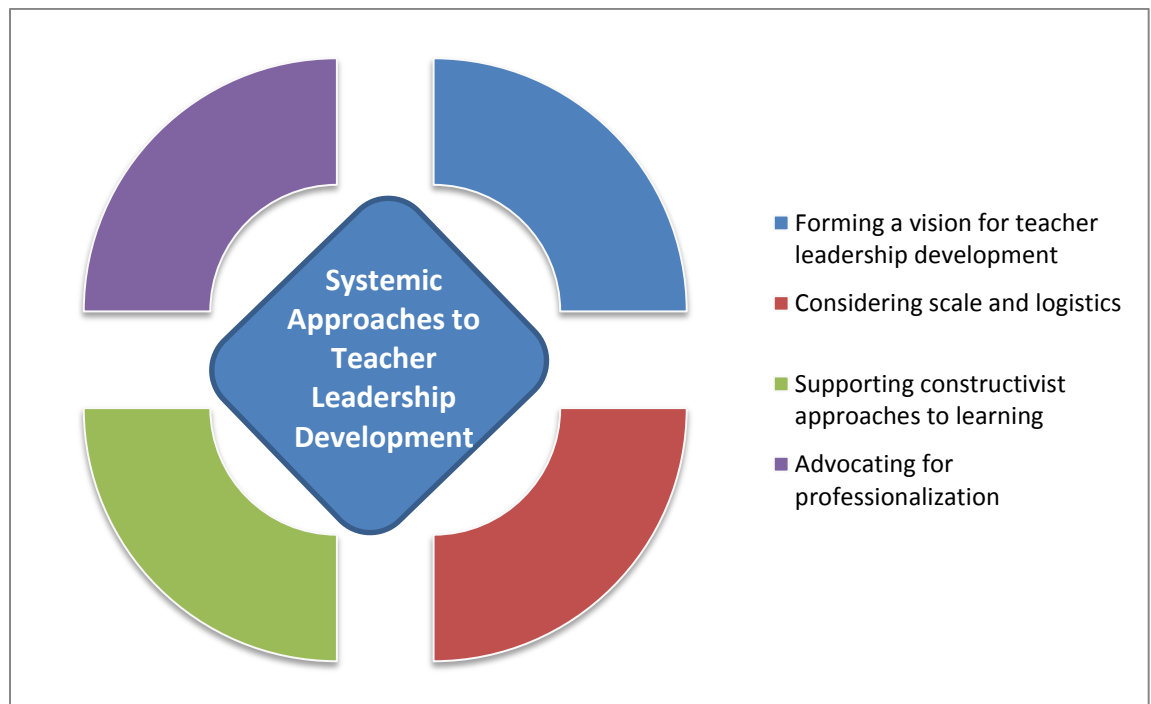
In this section, I will present four recommendations to practitioners that stem from my case study findings and conclusions. Based on the context of a school system's role in supporting its teachers' development as leaders, I recommend that:

1. School districts should establish a vision for teacher leadership development.

2. School districts should consider the logistics and scale that mesh with their system's vision and size.
3. School districts should support views of teacher leadership development through a lens of constructivist learning.
4. School districts should further the moral purpose of professionalizing teaching.

In Figure 5, below, I have represented how a framework of vision, logistics/scale, constructivist learning, and moral purpose would coalesce around a school systems' practices to support systemic teacher leadership development. Figure 5 is followed by a description of each component of this framework.

Figure 5. Framework for Teacher Leadership Development (TLD)



## Forming a Vision for Teacher Leadership Development (TLD)

I recommend that school districts initiate a teacher leadership development (TLD) framework by formulating a vision for TLD that can then be communicated to others. I suggest that many stakeholders share in this process and that teachers in particular play a lead role in establishing their vision for what TLD might entail.

Furthermore, I recommend that a variety of approaches be used with this TLD envisioning process, such as small group meetings, focus groups, surveys, and other virtual forms of communication that transcend time and place. In addition, the professionalization of teaching could be advanced by such discourse primarily by being teacher-led with principals and district personnel serving in supporting roles. To establish such a vision, the following questions might be considered:

- How do we define teachers as *demonstrating/developing* leadership?
- What are some examples of how teachers are *currently* enacting leadership across our school system? What are some *non-examples*?
- What are some ways in which teachers communicate their identity as leaders (i.e., publicly or informally with colleagues)?
- What supports, resources or professional development opportunities do our teachers currently have available that may help them to build their confidence as practitioners and self-identification as leaders (e.g., workshop offerings; financial support for higher education; access to professional learning networks; updates on policies and emerging practices in the profession; guidance/support with communication skills, public speaking, and writing, etc.)?
- What new supports, resources, or professional development opportunities do our teachers *want/need* to help them build confidence as practitioners and self-

identification as leaders (e.g., inside or outside the system; virtual; based on relevance to individual needs and interests, etc.)?

- What are ways that we can effectively differentiate the supports, resources, or professional development opportunities that are available to our teachers to align with teachers' unique needs as professionals (e.g., offer conference style sessions throughout our system; invest in professional development networks and opportunities outside the system; support principals' work in providing differentiated professional development, etc.)?
- What are our current practices we should sustain in support of our teachers' identities and development as leaders (e.g., professional development, organizational, evaluative, or support)?
- What are practices we should cease or barriers that currently exist in our school system which impede teachers' confidence/abilities as practitioners and/or self-identification as leaders (e.g., inequitably providing TLD for all teachers, calling upon a chosen few with whom to share leadership)?
- If we were to prioritize the improvements we must make to support our TLD framework, what comes first, second, third, and so forth?
- How do we go about initiating such reform and ensuring all stakeholders are informed, involved, and working in support of our TLD framework?

### **Considering Scale and Logistics**

As school systems consider the elements of a teacher leadership development framework, I recommend that they consider how their district's size and the priorities established through their vision will impact the logistics of its implementation. For instance, the district I studied decided to implement "TLDP" through an eight-part district-led workshop series that was attended by 26 teachers from across their system. Even though the district's size meant that 26 teachers proportionally represented one-

sixteenth of their teaching force, I interpreted the program's scale and logistics as a *chosen few* approach to teacher leadership development. However, if other school systems wish to adopt a framework of *leadership development for all* rather than the *chosen few* approach, then I recommend they consider the following questions in developing their framework:

- How/where/in what context will we support professional development for our teachers that builds their capacity as practitioners and identities as leaders?
- How will our framework ensure that *all* teachers in our system develop professional practices and identities as leaders?
- What role will principals, school-based personnel, and district personnel play in ensuring that all teachers are impacted by this framework?
- How will principals' and district personnel's support be differentiated and distributed equitably to impact *all* teachers in the system (e.g., must all district leaders meet simultaneously with all participants of a program or can this be done differently to spread more coverage of support throughout the system, etc.)?
- What types of professional development experiences will principals and district personnel need in order to support the implementation of this framework across each of our schools (e.g., reading and reflecting on distributed leadership, coaching practices, and building effective teams; engaging alongside teachers and other stakeholders in the co-construction of our TLD framework etc.)?
- To what extent will our framework call for teachers to come together and meet away from their schools? What would be the purpose of such meetings?
- Could we hold larger-scale informational/inspirational meetings for teachers based on specific elements of the framework and then have individual schools conduct their own follow-up?

- Could the TLD framework include multiple sets of summertime or other non-student day workshop sessions that allow us to meet the needs of all teachers across our district?
- To what extent will we hold multiple offerings of the same session and/or differentiate the content of what we make available to teachers (e.g., offer personality/conflict studies for some; leading PLC development for others, etc.)?
- What are the ways in which we already support pathways for teachers to collaborate and network with one another in our district's unique setting? How can we build upon and improve these pathways?
- What other creative possibilities exist for establishing forums, physical spaces, and/or a district culture that would support networking and collaboration (e.g., building a new TLD center; enhancing our schools' physical layouts to promote more collaboration, etc.)?

### **Supporting Constructivist Approaches to Learning**

The results of this case study indicated that "TLDP's" scope and sequence was implemented through constructivist views of teacher professional development. In addition, this approach to TLD demonstrated forms of distributed leadership such as sharing leadership among stakeholders, capacity-building, and fostering a legacy of effective practices, innovation, and reform. As such, I recommend that school systems consider ways to adopt constructivist views of learning within their TLD framework and I therefore encourage consideration of the following questions:

- How can we facilitate environments for our teachers where they can read, reflect, and discuss relevant topics that will enhance their abilities to lead?

- What role could *blogging* and *social media* play in this aspect of the framework (i.e., from the standpoint of teachers openly reflecting on/sharing their knowledge and practices)?
- Are there simulations or role-playing activities that teachers can engage in that will further their development as change-agents and leaders in the profession?
- In what ways can we support teachers as they build the confidence to speak publicly and share ideas/best practices (e.g., mock scenarios; encouraging teachers to present at faculty meetings and/or professional conferences, etc.)?
- To what extent are teachers already collaborating actively within their schools/PLC groups to self-reflect upon and discuss their instructional practices and their students' learning/needs? How can such practices be enhanced through our TLD framework (e.g., professional readings, videos displaying exemplary practices from around the profession, etc.)?
- In what ways might self-reflective activities and/or personality inventories be implemented and encouraged to help build a safe environment for teacher professional development and sharing of best practices across our system?
- How can we support teachers' abilities/comfort with conflict resolution and building consensus around competing ideas and initiatives (e.g., through specific professional readings; mock scenario/role-play activities; collaboration-coaches working with PLCs on authentic problems of practice)?

### **Advocating for the Professionalization of Teaching**

I recommend that school districts intentionally advocate for and support the professionalization of teaching through their TLD framework. In order for systems to identify how their framework aligns with the sorts of scholarly views on professionalization discussed earlier in this chapter, I suggest that the following questions be addressed:



- How can we ensure that teachers are the quintessential professionals upon whose direction the future of education must be led (e.g., teachers having influence over professional development practices; fluidly sharing leadership throughout our schools/district; providing competitive compensation structures; supporting and advocating for teachers' pursuits of higher education; etc.)?
- What barriers currently exist that hinder teachers from being viewed as professionals/exerting influence (e.g., centralized control of professional development; limited opportunities to share leadership; limited support for teachers' compensation/pursuit of higher education, etc.)?
- How do we ensure teachers have a clear and influential voice (e.g., in identifying professional development needs; in how teachers are encouraged to advocate publicly/outside our district's confines, etc.)?
- How will our school system fluidly share leadership responsibilities with teachers and flatten the hierarchies/bureaucracy of our organization (e.g., readily provide access to "district support personnel"; keep teachers in the classroom, but also free up their time to contribute broadly to the profession)?
- What sorts of systemic and/or symbolic practices could support professionalization (e.g. using public relations/social media to highlight teachers' roles/legacies, etc.)?
- What sorts of professional partnerships can we engage in that can also provide support for our TLD framework (e.g., universities; professional development organizations; advocacy groups, etc.)?

### **Final Reflections and Areas of Interest for the Future**

As I have explicated through this qualitative research study, *teachers demonstrating leadership* is a construct that has been defined through a diverse array of possibilities and historically and symbolically embedded beneath several layers of bureaucracy which have acted to underprofessionalize the field. In developing the final

chapter of my dissertation, I reflected often on all that I learned and experienced through this research process. Most notably, I had the privilege of interacting with and learning about the experiences of eleven talented, dedicated educators. Each of these participants displayed patience in sharing their thoughts and expertise about the manner in which one school district approached building its capacity to distribute leadership and innovate in the pursuit of student success. Secondly, I gained new insights about program development and implementation in the context of this particular case. Furthermore, I found myself enlightened about the possibilities that exist for how educational practitioners and researchers, alike, can further what Frost (2014), Mehta (2013), and others have highlighted as the moral prerogative of professionalizing the field of teaching. Stemming from this substantial learning experience, I intend to take what I have learned and apply my new knowledge and perspectives about building a *TLD framework* in ways that will help develop and support teachers as leaders as well as help those around me to raise the tenor of the profession. I, too, see this as a moral purpose worth considerable efforts and pursuits.

Finally, thinking about my aspirations to continue with scholarship, I have also identified two related topics about which I am interested in conducting future research. My first area of interest would be to parlay this case study of “TLDP” into a longitudinal study of sorts. Through such a study, I would conduct additional rounds of interviews with each of the key informants over a period of one or two more years and focus my inquiry upon their continued experiences as educators, their views on the nature of

teacher leadership, and their perspectives about the profession, in general. Such a study might provide additional and possibly deeper insights into how the teacher leadership development practices explicated through this case study perhaps had lasting impacts on teachers' careers. Related to this, I would also be interested in conducting a broader-scale examination of how school systems across North Carolina and the United States are approaching the construct of teacher leadership development. This second area of future research would potentially add something to the body of research that I found lacking at the time of this study: substantial descriptions in the literature of how school districts were developing and implementing teacher leadership development programs or academies. In either of these future research projects, the contents of this case study would therefore provide a valuable context from which to begin.

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## APPENDIX A

### NCPTS STANDARD 1 - ELEMENTS AND INDICATORS

#### Element A: Teachers lead in their classrooms.

- Understands how they contribute to students graduating from high school. Uses data to understand the skills and abilities of students.
- Takes responsibility for the progress of students to ensure that they graduate from high school. Provides evidence of data driven instruction throughout all classroom activities. Establishes a safe and orderly classroom.
- Communicates to students the vision of being prepared for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Evaluates student progress using a variety of assessment data. Creates a classroom culture that empowers students to collaborate.
- Encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. Uses classroom assessment data to inform program planning. Empowers and encourages students to create and maintain a safe and supportive school and community environment

#### Element B: Teachers demonstrate leadership in the school.

- Attends professional learning community meetings. Displays awareness of the goals of the school improvement plan.
- Participates in professional learning community. Participates in developing and/or implementing the school improvement plan.
- Assumes a leadership role in professional learning community. Collaborates with school personnel on school improvement activities.
- Collaborates with colleagues to improve the quality of learning in the school. Assumes a leadership role in implementing school improvement plan throughout the building.

#### Element C: Teachers lead in the teaching profession.

- Has knowledge of opportunities and the need for professional growth and begins to establish relationships with colleagues.
- Contributes to the: improvement of the profession through professional growth, establishment of positive working relationships, school's decision-making processes as required.



- Promotes positive working relationships through professional growth activities and collaboration.
- Seeks opportunities to lead professional growth activities and decision-making processes.

Element D: Teachers advocate for schools and students.

- Knows about the policies and practices affecting student learning.
- Supports positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning.
- Participates in developing policies and practices to improve student learning.
- Actively participates, promotes, and provides strong supporting evidence for implementation of initiatives to improve education.

Element E: Teachers demonstrate high ethical standards.

- Understands the importance of ethical behavior as outlined in the *Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators* and the *Standards for Professional Conduct*.
- Demonstrates ethical behavior through adherence to the *Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators* and the *Standards for Professional Conduct*.
- Knows and upholds the *Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators* and the *Standards for Professional Conduct*.
- Models the tenets of the *Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators* and the *Standards for Professional Conduct* and encourages others to do the same.

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Source: NC Teacher Evaluation Process (McREL, 2009)

## APPENDIX B

### INDICATORS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN NCPTS

#### Selected Elements with Indicators of *Teacher Leadership* in NCPTS Rubric, *Standards 2-5*

NCPTS Standards	“Distinguished” Rating-Indicators that Describe Teacher Leadership
2. Teachers establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students	<p>A. Encourages and advises others to provide a nurturing and positive learning environment for all students.</p> <p>D. Adapts instruction for the benefit of students with special needs and helps colleagues do the same for their students.</p> <p>E. Promotes trust and understanding throughout the school community.</p>
3. Teachers know the content they teach	<p>A. Assists colleagues in applying strategies in their classrooms that make instruction rigorous and relevant based on the standard curriculum.</p> <p>C. Collaborates with teachers from other grades or subject areas to establish links between disciplines and influence school-wide curriculum and teaching practice. <b>-AND-</b> Promotes global awareness and its relevance to all faculty members, influencing curriculum and teaching practices throughout the school.</p>
4. Teachers facilitate learning for their students	<p>A. Encourages and guides colleagues to adapt instruction to align with students’ developmental levels. <b>AND</b> Stays abreast of current research about student learning and emerging resources and encourages the school to adopt or adapt them for the benefit of all students.</p> <p>C. Stays abreast of emerging research areas and new and innovative materials and incorporates them into lesson plans and instructional strategies.</p> <p>E. Encourages and assists teachers throughout the school to integrate critical thinking and problem solving skills into their instructional practices.</p> <p>F. Fosters the development of student leadership and teamwork skills to be used beyond the classroom.</p> <p>G. Establishes school-wide and grade appropriate vehicles to encourage students throughout the school to develop effective communication skills.</p> <p>H. Encourages and guides colleagues to assess 21st century skills, knowledge, and dispositions and to use the assessment information to adjust their instructional practice.</p>
5. Teachers reflect on their practice	<p>A. Provides a detailed analysis about what can be done to improve student learning and uses such analyses to adapt instructional practices and materials within the classroom and at the school level.</p>

Cited from: McREL (2009). NC Professional Teaching Standards Rubric

## APPENDIX C

### FIRST-ROUND TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### Basic Introduction to Participant Interview & Interview Questions

*“As someone who is a former classroom teacher and has spent the past 5 years as a practicing school administrator, I am fascinated by what it means to be a teacher leader. Currently, I have chosen to study TLDP for a doctoral research class I am completing. Specifically, I am very interested in the teachers who have chosen to participate in TLDP. I want to learn about TLDP participants’ backgrounds, what interested you in this program, and learn more about your professional goals and beliefs about this program may help you to meet TLDP’s intended outcomes for teachers.”*

1. First of all, I would like to learn more about you as a professional. Tell me a little about your educational background and how you first got into the teaching profession.
2. What led you to the decision to become a teacher? What motivated you to make this decision?
3. *One of my research goals is to learn more about your perspectives as someone who is participating in TLDP.* What does the word, “leadership” mean to you?
4. Thinking about colleagues with whom you have worked, peers from the TLDP, etc., describe for me some of the characteristics/behaviors you believe a “teacher leader” hold.
5. What was it about TLDP that appealed to you? What led you to want to apply for the program?
6. What do you expect to gain from the experience of participating in TLDP?
7. What are some of your professional goals, perhaps several years into the future?
8. Now I would like us to talk about the vision/objectives of TLDP, as stated by your school system. I am going to read each of the objectives, and after each one, I would like you to describe what each of these means to you, and in what way, if any, you hope to meet each of these objectives in your professional practice.
  - a. “1. Build leadership skills and capacity among all teachers.”
  - b. “2. Improve professional practice.”
  - c. “3. Develop a culture of shared accountability.”
  - d. “4. Demonstrate ethical principles and uphold the code of ethics and standards.”
9. Is there anything else you would like to share that would help me better understand your experiences to date?

## APPENDIX D

### SECOND-ROUND TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### Basic Introduction to Participant Interview & Interview Questions

*“Thank you for allowing us the time to sit down and speak some more about your experiences with TLDP. I would like to take a few moments to discuss the experiences you had throughout completing the program and how you believe this may have helped you learn and grow as a professional”*

1. Let me first ask you, before we get into what TLDP focused on and all of the program’s objectives, what does teacher leadership now mean to you?
2. What do you remember were your original expectations for participating in TLDP?
3. Please describe some of the experiences you had this past school year related to TLDP:
  - a. What were some memorable moments for you?
  - b. In what ways has TLDP perhaps met your expectations?
  - c. Are there ways that the experience fell short of what you had expected?
4. In what ways did TLDP perhaps help you grow as a professional? How so?
5. What were the ways in which you learned? What was it about the way in which this program was set up that has perhaps helped you learn about leadership?
6. Has TLDP in any way changed your thinking about what you’d like to do in the near future in your career? Why? How so? What are some of your professional goals in going forward?
7. What do you see is the most important way that a school district can help its teachers to learn and grow? Were there areas where TLDP fell short of this, and could improve (as a program) in going forward?
8. I’d like us to revisit the goals and objectives of TLDP, as stated by the school district. For each one of these four, I’d to learn more about how you see yourself fulfilling these/working toward these in going forward; in other words, now that you have completed the program.
  - a. “1. Build leadership skills and capacity among all teachers.”
  - b. “2. Improve professional practice.”
  - c. “3. Develop a culture of shared accountability.”
  - d. “4. Demonstrate ethical principles and uphold the code of ethics and standards.”
9. Is there anything else related to my study of TLDP that you would like to, or be willing to share with me?

## APPENDIX E

### DISTRICT-LEVEL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### Basic Introduction to District Stakeholder Interview & Interview Questions

*“As someone who is a former classroom teacher and has spent the past 6 years as a practicing school administrator, I am fascinated by what it means to be a teacher leader. As you know, I have chosen to study TLDP as an example of how a school district has approached the challenges of the state mandate that all teachers must demonstrate leadership. In speaking with you today, I would like to learn more about your views on how and why this program was designed, your perceptions as a key stakeholder who has overseen this program over the past four years, and your overall perceptions of the role a school district has in distributing leadership throughout the school system and helping to build the capacity of its teachers.”*

1. First, I would like to ask you about how TLDP first came about. What is the story behind how this program first came to be?
2. What would you say was your most important role and/or influence in getting this program off the ground?
3. I’d like to ask you a contextual question: What does the term “teacher leadership” mean to you?
4. What do you see as the biggest reason that the State of North Carolina mandated that all teachers demonstrate leadership through the professional teaching standards?
5. What do you see as school district-level administrators’ most important roles in distributing leadership throughout a school system? How might TLDP contribute to this?
6. Thinking about the first couple of cohorts that went through TLDP, what do you think were the early perceptions about why this program was worth participating in? Why do you think this was the case?
7. What were your initial expectations for what the participants would gain out of completing TLDP?
8. Now I would like us to talk about the vision/objectives of TLDP, as stated by your school system. I am going to read each of the objectives, and after each one, I would like you to describe what each of these means to you, and you envisioned teachers might meet these objectives:
  - a. “1. Build leadership skills and capacity among all teachers.”
  - b. “2. Improve professional practice.”

- c. "3. Develop a culture of shared accountability."
  - d. "4. Demonstrate ethical principles and uphold the code of ethics and standards."
- 9. Have there been any substantial changes to the way TLDP has been run the past four years? New session strands? New types of assignments? New expectations for candidates on the part of the district? Why so? What has perhaps been omitted from the program? Why so?
  - a. Ask for any documents that can be reviewed, such as session materials/agendas, access to internal/external evaluations that were completed of the program, participant artifacts, such as completed project presentations
- 10. How would you define, in general terms, a teacher as having successfully completed TLDP? Characteristics? Specific accomplishments? What have been some of the career trajectories of teachers who have completed TLDP and perhaps since left the classroom?
- 11. Is there anything else related to my study of TLDP that you would like to, or be willing to share with me?

## APPENDIX F

### INITIAL ONLINE SURVEY

**Q1. At which level school do you teach?**

- PK/Elementary School (PK-5) ● Middle School (6-8) ● High School (9-12)

**Q2. Which best describes your role as a teacher?**

- Classroom/core subject teacher ● Exploratory/elective class teacher
- Support Staff/Media/Technology ● Instructional Facilitator/Specialist/Other

**Q3. For how many years have you served as a teacher/educator?**

- 1-3 years ● 4-6 years ● 7-10 years ● 10-15 years ● 16 years +

**Q4. Which two (2) of the following choices best describe why you chose to participate in TLDP? (Choose no more than 2)**

- Word of mouth - Previous Cohort members spoke highly of the program. ● I need a new challenge in my career.
- I am seeking career advancement as a teacher leader. ● I want to be a more active teacher leader in my school.
- I want to learn about what teacher leadership means. ● I am in need of renewal credits.
- I want to eventually serve as a school administrator.
- I want to improve my ratings on the NC Teacher Evaluation.
- My administrator and/or mentor told me to apply.

*Open-Ended Questions:*

**Q6. Please explain more about why it was that you wanted to participate in TLDP?**

**Q7. Please briefly explain your professional goals, and how you think TLDP might help you in achieving these goals.**

**Q8. Thinking about your own motivations for participating in TLDP, how do you intend to meet some or all of these goals upon completion of this professional development experience?**

1. Build leadership skills and capacity among all teachers.
2. Improve professional practice.
3. Develop a culture of shared accountability.
4. Demonstrate ethical principles and uphold the code of ethics and standards.

**Q9. Please click here if you would be interested in participating in an in-depth, one-to-one interview regarding your goals and expectations as relates to TLDP. It would last approximately 35-45 minutes, and we would meet be held at a mutually agreed upon time and location.** [Yes. Please contact me...] [No. I do not wish to...]

## APPENDIX G

### ARCHIVED WRITTEN REFLECTION DATA ANALYSIS TABLES

Table i. Summary of TLDP participants' professional goals

<b>Next steps for TLDP participants' careers (n=78)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Stay in classroom and/or current position	n=57
Leave classroom: pursue administration career	n=13
Leave classroom: pursue formal lead teacher/coach position	n=6
Change grade-levels or positions (i.e, other than Admin/Lead Teacher)	n=5
Leave district or retire	n=2
<b>TLDP participants' career goals over next 3-5 years (n=78)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Enroll in/complete graduate school in <i>Educational Leadership</i>	n=12
Enroll in/complete graduate school in <i>Curriculum &amp; Instruction (e.g., special education)</i>	n=13
Enroll in/complete graduate school in <i>area unknown to/unstated by participant</i>	n=3
Focus on own professional development/readings/leadership development	n=18
Assume greater leadership/decision-making/committees at school	n=16
Focus on delivering professional development to others/mentoring others	n=16
Advocate for students (e.g., giving them "voice"), teachers (e.g., higher salaries), or specific programs (e.g., "AV ID", "Gifted Education," etc.):	n=11
Focus on media- & technology-related integration/enhancements/outreach	n=11
Pursue National Board Certification (NBCT) process	n=9
Focus on collegial relationships/collaboration/school-climate	n=8
Continue their TLDP project or another specific project	n=7
Focus work on specific teaching practices (project-based learning, inquiry-based instruction, etc.):	n=7
Lead by example/serve as a positive role model in their school	n=4
Focus specifically on developing curriculum (i.e., for others' use):	n=3
Present at/attend state/local/national conferences	n=3
Work on state-wide initiatives/work with NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI)	n=2
Achieve more balance in life/focus on health & wellness	n=2



Table ii. Summary of TLDP participants' desired areas for support

<b>TLDP participants' desired areas for support (n=64)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Pleased with current support; praised school and/or district	n=26
More areas provided to lead and/or have their goals supported (e.g., pursue National Board, continue with project, etc.)	n=17
Support for specific initiatives or programs (e.g., gifted-instruction, math & technology fairs, media & technology outreach, etc.)	n=14
Support their pursuit of administration; select them to interview for positions	n=8
Continue with the support they already receive so they may enact leadership; engage in professional development	n=7
Provide financial support; form a cohort for graduate school	n=7
Formal follow-up opportunities for past TLDP for participants	n=3
Would like district to advocate for the teaching profession (e.g., salaries)	n=3
District should distribute leadership more widely; keep perspective on the demands of the teaching profession	n=3
District should continue to encourage leadership; provide TLDP for others	n=2

Table iii. Summary of TLDP participants' perceived areas of growth

<b>How TLDP participants perceived their areas of growth (n=60)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
More self-aware; have better-awareness of how others view them	n=20
Better able to collaborate and/or problem-solve with colleagues	n=18
More confidence; greater self-identification as a leader	n=13
Stepping out of their comfort-zone; more comfortable speaking up for their beliefs and trying new things	n=13
Better able to work through and/or deal with conflict at school	n=7
Communication and/or listening skills have improved	n=7
Self-perceived enhanced teaching and/or classroom leadership abilities:	n=7
Better understanding of change processes and/or its impact on school culture	n=6
Better overall understanding of teachers' roles in shared leadership	n=5
More perspective of schools; districts; that which is beyond their classroom	n=4
More apt to mentor others; lead PD for others	n=3
More cultural awareness (i.e., based on race, socioeconomics, national origin)	n=2
Now views the importance of wellness and/or balance away from work	n=2
Views themselves as more influential in their own school	n=2
Has become more reflective; a better learner	n=2
Now more committed to their own goals and professional growth	n=2
Has come to view self as "professional" and "not just a teacher"	n=1

Table iv. Summary of what TLDP participants learned about change

What TLDP participants' perceived they had learned about change (n=48)	Frequency
Specific statements about the way in which teacher leaders are catalysts for change [ <i>*explained in more detail within Chapter Five</i> ]	n=18*
Change is difficult; intimidating; can cause conflict, reluctance, anxiety, etc.	n=13
Reference to specific elements of "Iceberg" text & "Change Game" (e.g., the roles people play; navigating bureaucracy; buy-in from decision-makers, etc.)	n=12
Self-awareness/awareness of others aids the collaborative change processes	n=7
Reflected on resistance to change they experienced through their TLDP project	n=6
Change requires support from administration/influential actors	n=5
Change is a time-consuming process	n=5
Change requires effective communication/educating others about new initiatives and issues	n=4
Effective change agents are visionary/lead by example/build moral purpose	n=4
Change is a very personal experience/people react differently to change	n=3
Now believe they should speak up and get more involved with change	n=2
Effective leaders use facts/effective processes to drive change	n=2
Diversity of teams/opinions can aid change processes	n=2
Change comes from <i>within</i> , not an external influence that is above or below	n=1

Table v. Summary of TLDP participants' views about their influence

<b>How TLDP participants viewed their influence at school (n=45)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
More likely to share ideas/speak out/enact leadership	n=13
Better able to/more likely to collaborate with colleagues in school, PLC's, etc.	n=13
Continuing with growth made through project; continuing a specific initiative	n=7
Joining/continuing service on leadership committees; more decision-making	n=7
Continuing to reflect on personality of self/others to improve teamwork	n=5
Enacting TL through general understanding of leadership skills/dispositions	n=5
Setting positive example; modeling best practices/technology for others	n=5
Building stronger relationships with colleagues/influencing school climate	n=3
More awareness of distributed/shared leadership; supporting district initiatives	n=3
Providing formal PD for others; developing/leading curriculum initiatives	n=3
Taking more risks; trying new things with instruction, technology, etc.	n=3
Advocating more for students/give students more voice	n=1
More comfort with situations of conflict to benefit their team, school, etc.	n=1
More apt to embrace own culture/heritage and use it to make positive impact	n=1

Table vi. Summary of TLDP participants' changes in educational philosophy

<b>TLDP participants revisiting their philosophy of education (n=14)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
There were some changes in their order and/or magnitude of preferences	n=12
There were no changes in their order and/or magnitude of preferences	n=2
Progressive score stayed or became highest	n=7
Humanistic score increased some and/or became highest	n=6
Social change score increased or stayed highest	n=3
Behavioral score decreased and/or dropped in order of preferences	n=3
Comprehensive score decreased and/or dropped in order of preferences	n=2
Social Change score decreased and/or dropped in order of preferences	n=1
Progressive score decreased and/or dropped in order of preferences	n=1

## APPENDIX H

### ONLINE SURVEY DATA TABLES

Table vii. Why respondents chose to apply for TLDP

Reasons Provided for Multiple-Choice Selection	Frequency
I want to be a more active teacher leader in my school.	8
Word of mouth: Previous participants spoke highly of the program.	7
I want to eventually serve as a school administrator.	4
I am seeking career advancement as a teacher leader.	3
I need a new challenge in my career.	3
I want to learn about what teacher leadership means.	2
I want to improve my ratings on the NC Teacher Evaluation.	1
I am in need of renewal credits.	0
My administrator and/or mentor told me to apply.	0
<b>Total number of teachers' choices selected</b>	<b>28</b>

Table viii. Elaboration on choice to participate in TLDP

Teacher	Level	Responses
Vivian	ES	I would like to utilize this opportunity as a means of learning effective strategies in working with all stakeholders to develop a comprehensive school counseling program.
Lilly	ES	I wanted to become a better public speaker/presenter. I have anxiety when it comes to speaking in front of a large group of people. I am also always seeking ways to improve my teaching.
Debra	ES	I was interested in participating in [TLDP] because I wanted to be a stronger leader within my school. I feel my school is very high performing and dedicated to helping students in every way possible. This program will give me the opportunity to contribute more, develop leadership potential, and help our school culture.
Melissa	ES	I find it motivating to be surrounded by like-minded peers who strive to be lifelong learners. I consider myself to be highly reflective and analytical. Stepping into leadership pushes me to address personal weaknesses and become more self-aware. I am interested in learning more about how to move a school forward and even how to move a district forward. I also value the opportunity to network with people who have different experiences or who hold different positions.
Isabelle	MS	I consider [TLDP] a great opportunity to know more about the leadership role in the classroom, in the school, and in the district. If you know more about the leaders and their expectations you can infer how they will influence the community.
Melissa	MS	I wanted to participate in [TLDP] because I wanted to learn more about myself as a leader. I feel it is so important as a leader to be able to reflect on your personal strengths and weaknesses and how you can use these to lead others to be better, more effective teachers. Also, I feel that I might want to go into administration in the future and this opportunity would be wonderful to begin that path.
Denise	MS	I feel that it is essential for a school media coordinator to establish a leadership role in his/her school and district. The experience of [TLDP] would be a natural progression in my career path. I also understand that the process is a self-assessment type process, leadership model, and application of what was learned. I felt that my personal goals would benefit from the process.

Hannah	MS	To be a more effective teacherpreneur, I want to strengthen my interpersonal skills. Additionally, I am rather new to the district and my school and have to build my relationships from the ground up.
Thomas	MS	I want to learn to be a better educator in order to make a positive impact in my school and in the lives my students.
Nancy	MS	Teachers who participated in previous [TLDP] cohorts not only raved about how wonderful it was, they all seemed to be re-energized and re-focused in their teaching. As someone who has been in education for quite a number of years, I felt I could benefit from the shot in the arm that [TLDP] seemed to offer career teachers.
Amy	HS	I like to keep myself involved in professional development opportunities. I would like to seek further education in the future and become a school administrator. I felt like [TLDP] will help make me a better teacher by looking at who I am and what type of teacher I am to make me more effective as an administrator later on in my career.
Wally	HS	I am currently in graduate school obtaining my [administrative degree]. I felt this would be a good opportunity for me to learn about myself, how I interact as a team member, and skills necessary to be an effective leader.
Linda	HS	I just completed my eighth year teaching. I feel that I have enough experience at this point to step up and be a leader within my school. [TLDP] is a stepping stone to reach that goal.



Table ix. Respondents' career goals and how they thought TLDP would help them

Teacher	Level	Responses
Vivian	ES	My professional goals include impacting public policy, influencing decision-makers, and coaching colleagues to improve our school. It is my intention that [TLDP] will help me work better with others, especially those with different perspectives and goals.
Lilly	ES	I am on [the School Improvement Team] so [TLDP] will help me do well for my team and school. I want to lead/teach other teachers' new ideas and concepts. I eventually would like to work at a college and teach others about becoming a teacher. Ex: Children's Lit
Debra	ES	At the present time I completely enjoy being an elementary school teacher in fourth and fifth grade. However, I have been considering transitioning to middle school or administration in the future. [TLDP] will help me develop leadership skills and improve my professional practice which will be needed for future endeavors.
Melissa	ES	I recently decided that I want to pursue administration. I want to be an administrator who is warm, innovative, effective, and respected. I believe [TLDP] will allow me to learn from the best and give me the opportunity to share my talents with people who are equally eager to learn.
Isabelle	MS	My professional goals are to advance in my career as a teacher, leader, and person in my school district. I want to know more about the community and be a better teacher for my students. [TLDP] will help me to identify my weaknesses and strengths.
Katelyn	MS	I would first like to become someone who my colleagues view as an expert in my field and will seek me out for advice. Eventually, I would like to become an administrator either as a principal, curriculum, or in special education.
Denise	MS	I'm a lifelong learner. I went back to graduate school at 48 years of age and finished at 52. I'm more passionate now about learning than I've ever been. I felt the duty of being a mother and wife, especially with a child with a disability. I loved both roles and cherished each year. My children are now somewhat independent and I would like to further my career with every opportunity I have to deepen my passion for promoting literacy in our community with the community. I feel that this is a natural role for a media coordinator to take in order to be an effective leader in

		his/her school.
Hannah	MS	My professional goals include impacting public policy, influencing decision-makers, and coaching colleagues to improve our school. It is my intention that [TLDP] will help me work better with others, especially those with different perspectives and goals.
Thomas	MS	I want to instruct pre-service and new teachers on current classroom practice.
Nancy	MS	I want to actively lead in my school. I know I have the potential because I have exercised a higher degree of leadership in other schools. I'm in a great setting where teacher leadership is valued and encouraged.
Amy	HS	I feel like [TLDP] will help me learn about leadership qualities and how to use these in my classroom and school and continue to inspire me to move forward with my goals of becoming an administrator in the future.
Wally	HS	My professional goals are to become an administrator. I chose this career path because as a teacher I can make a positive impact on the students in my class but as an administrator I can make a difference in every students' life through the teachers that I inspire.
Linda	HS	I hope to move into an administrative position (although not necessarily a principal's position). i.e. Career Development Coordinator, etc.

Table x. How respondents intended to meet TLDP's stated objectives

Teacher	Level	Responses
Vivian	ES	[TLDP] will stress the importance of self-awareness in leadership development. Through the entire experience, I would like to better understand myself as a leader in order to effectively collaborate with all stakeholders to promote academic achievement, college and career readiness, and equity and access for all students.
Lilly	ES	1. I will do this by sharing what I have learned with my colleagues so they can be better leaders as well. / 2. Again, I will become a better teacher within my classroom by using the skills I have learned with my students to help them become 21st Century Learners. / 3. I will hold myself accountable as well as my teammates and school. / 4. I will do this by showing good ethical practices in my classroom as well as outside the classroom with my colleagues.
Debra	ES	I believe the project my group is intending to create within our school will meet all four of the... goals. I am very excited about how our project will benefit at risk students in all grade levels while developing a culture of shared accountability within school.
Melissa	ES	First of all, I hope to lead by example. By taking part in [TLDP] and encouraging others to take part in the future, I can build leadership. Also I want to showcase the talents of other teachers by asking them to talk about their success or do a workshop so others can learn from them. The [TLDP] project will assist my colleagues and I in building a culture of shared accountability because the three of us have assessed the needs of our school and have selected a project that aims to address specific deficits. The focus of the project will be on enhancing critical thinking before, during, and after reading. Multiple grade levels should benefit from our project.
Isabelle	MS	I am starting an after school program at my school, I have enough resources to start this August and this will be my final project where I expect to accomplish not only [TLDP] goals but my personal goals as well.
Katelyn	MS	I would like to be able to share my strengths with other teachers to help improve their practice through knowledge of different teaching methods and differentiation techniques. I also would do my best to encourage teachers to voice their opinions and share their strengths to improve others.

Denise	MS	I would like to sustain community involvement with our future generation and work force that will serve us in the future.
Hannah	MS	1. My interpersonal skills will develop. / 2. My own teaching will improve as I become more adept at negotiating in a group setting, much like my students must learn to do. / 3. My school team is comprised of 2 other teachers on my grade level team, which is a new team for me this year. We will collaborate and share responsibility for all learners together.
Thomas	MS	I certainly want to build my leadership skills, and I hope this experience will help me grow.
Nancy	MS	I believe [TLDP] will force me to step up to the plate and do what I already know needs to be done.
Amy	HS	I intend to meet these goals upon completion of [TLDP] by building my leadership skills in my classroom and becoming more of a leader in my school with my project that we will work on. I think that as a whole group we will share accountability of changes in the school district and work to make positive changes for our schools.
Wally	HS	I intend to meet the goals through the project and product that my team and I create. The four goals stated above will be the driving force behind our product along with the goals of [our school improvement plan].
Linda	HS	I hope to have met all these goals - on some level. Hopefully with better leadership skills myself I can inspire and encourage my colleagues to step into those roles as well. Lead by example. I am always looking to improve my professional practice in the classroom and out. If I am a better leader outside of the classroom I will be better inside as well in addition to setting a better example for all my students. With stronger leaders within [our school and district], it stands to reason there is more ownership and shared responsibility. Ethics are of the utmost importance - especially within education.